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16th plenary meeting
Thursday, 22 September 2011, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Zinsou (Benin), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Address by Mr. Bronislaw Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Poland.

Mr. Bronislaw Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bronislaw Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Komorowski (*spoke in Polish; interpretation provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to cordially congratulate Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of the State of Qatar on his election to the post of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I assure him of our full support for his endeavours in that capacity.

I am honoured to speak on behalf of my country at this session of the General Assembly and to be able to address in this historic place representatives of all the countries of the world. Our participation at this session is also an opportunity for dialogue, a chance to get acquainted with the problems of nations from different regions of the world and to learn about their achievements and aspirations — and also their concerns and fears. It is an opportunity for reflection on how to deal with the challenges faced by humankind — by all of us.

I speak here on behalf of a country that over the past two decades has become a symbol of positive change — change that required courage and hard work. At the time of the collapse of the communist system, Poland was a country with a devastated State economy and an impoverished society. It was a country uncertain of its borders and its place in Europe. Thanks to deep economic and political transformations, Poland has become a country that enjoys stable democracy and a dynamic economy. It has become a country that makes an important contribution to international relations in Europe and to security and stability in its immediate environment and beyond.

Since 2008, in the course of the financial crisis, the Polish economy has maintained a positive growth rate. It is the only country in the European Union to do so. That was possible thanks to the work and the entrepreneurial spirit of the Polish people and thanks to successive Governments' courage in making difficult decisions.

In its foreign policy, Poland is building good-neighbourly relations with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, strengthening the security and unity of Europe. A hallmark of Polish foreign policy remains its solidarity with nations that aspire to live in freedom based on democracy and respect for human rights. That

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is an obligation derived from our national experience, the experience of the non-violent struggle of the Solidarity trade union, which paved the way for democratic and economic transitions in the countries of the former communist bloc.

We now stand ready to share our experience. That is our active and consistent approach in relation to the societies of Eastern Europe and, recently, in relation to the societies of Arab States, some of which have taken up a challenge similar to ours 20 years ago. We wish them luck, perseverance and courage, not only to fight for change but also to conduct dialogue and communicate with all those who can take part in this process. From our Polish experience we know that sometimes the inability to communicate and reach compromises and to overcome internal divisions — the inability to open oneself to dialogue with those who just recently were seen as enemies — hinders progress and can cause the failure of movements initiating major, necessary changes.

Today I speak on behalf of the country that holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU). The Union has become in recent decades a laboratory of huge positive developments in international life. The beginning of the integration process, with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community 60 years ago, was a Copernican revolution in international relations. A mechanism to effectively eliminate war between countries that seemed to be permanently in conflict with each other was successfully introduced. Archenemies have become irreplaceable friends. The number of countries that have opted for cooperation rather than conflict has been steadily growing.

That has given Europe an unprecedented long period of peace and enabled economic and social development not only in the sphere of the market but also in the field of human rights and in equalizing the levels of development. The European Union provides its members with security, stimulates their development and provides assistance to less developed regions and social groups. That is possible thanks to a principle of solidarity that goes beyond State borders.

The European Union has introduced a new quality to international life globally. It stabilizes its neighbourhood and is an inspiration and a role model in various regions of the world, where integration initiatives derive from the European experience. The European Union is also an active participant in the process of shaping a better world order for everyone. The progress that the world has experienced after the Cold War in the fields of human rights, international security and arms reductions, environmental protection, sustainable development and many other areas is for the most part due to the initiatives and involvement of the European Union — as Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, the President of the European Council, said here earlier (see A/66/PV.15).

I am convinced that not only will Europe's current difficulties — at the moment related to the financial standing of some of its member States — be overcome but that the EU will actually emerge stronger from the crisis. I am also convinced that the European social model and the model of EU relations with the outside world will remain an important point of reference for other regions of the world. Poland, which currently holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union, will spare no effort in ensuring that Europe remains committed to global affairs and can be counted on, as always. Europe's solidarity with the world and its openness will remain our priority.

The challenges facing the international community are considerable. The past decade in international life has been turbulent and difficult. Its beginning was marked by the tragic terrorist attacks here in New York, on 11 September 2001. The spectre of global terrorism has hung over the world, in the fear that terrorist organizations one day may make use of a weapon of mass destruction. Fortunately, our worst fears have not materialized and it has been possible to significantly reduce the terrorist threat.

At the same time, the atmosphere of the war on terror has been a hindrance to fostering trust, strengthening international stability and solving other important problems. In the past decade we have had to deal with increasing tensions between rich and poor, and between more and less developed countries and regions of the world. There have been signs of cross-cultural mistrust. Climate change negotiations, the new World Trade Organization (WTO) trade round and non-proliferation discussions are stalled. The Middle East peace process is not advancing. In addition to those negative trends, the international community was hit by the financial crisis in September 2008.

We cannot ignore these disturbing phenomena and signals. Nonetheless, there is good reason to be

optimistic and to believe that we can overcome difficulties and effectively face challenges. Hopes have been engendered by the economic growth that has been seen in many countries and regions that were once referred to as underdeveloped countries or the third world. Many countries have been able to seize the opportunities made available by globalization and give their societies prospects for development and prosperity. The responsible attitude of many Governments, within the Group of 20 and beyond, prevented the financial turbulence of 2008 from escalating into an economic crisis similar to the Great Depression of 1929. Openness and interdependence prevailed over protectionism and economic nationalism. President Barack Obama's initiatives to reduce nuclear arms and ensure their non-proliferation should be viewed in a similar manner.

The Arab Spring, notwithstanding the dramatic events surrounding it, is yet another step in the transition of countries in various regions of the world towards democracy and the empowerment of individuals and societies on the basis of respect for their aspirations to live in freedom and prosperity. These are aspirations to a life that is in harmony with values and standards that are not — as they were considered to be until recently — exclusively Western. Everyone, everywhere, is entitled to embrace those values; however, it is necessary to respect the local aspects and dimensions of these aspirations and rights, which cannot be separated from their cultural context.

The path to solving key global problems inevitably leads us to the United Nations or its specialized agencies. Not so long ago we faced the risk of a marginalizing of the United Nations, or even the building of parallel structures. The United Nations, however, remains indispensable in its role, as defined in the Charter and the main United Nations documents, especially those from the years 2000 and 2005. We in Poland combine optimism with realism, so we like the description of the United Nations that says that our Organization was not created to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell.

The Organization faces many tasks, whose aim is to protect the international community against crises and a decline at the international level. The United Nations must defend the already achieved level of civilized relations among nations, a key factor of which is the move away from violence towards the self-determination of nations, democracy and material prosperity.

I see the main tasks of the Organization as falling within the framework adopted in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (*resolution 60/1*), which focused on the triad of development, security and human rights. I am aware of the complexity and extent of the problems related to development, which encompass the issues of trade, finance, economic growth, environmental protection and development aid. I am aware of the limitations of the United Nations in this area, where the main instruments are in the hands of private entities — corporations, banks, stock exchanges and investment funds. The United Nations and its specialized agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and others have proved in the past how useful they are in this area.

Today our Organization must ensure the effective provision of aid to the poorest and to those in real need. They are the ones that are hardest hit by the crisis. Our responsibility is to limit the scourge of hunger in the world and help in combating pandemics and in providing access to drinking water. Without ensuring a minimal subsistence level for people, as well as health care and basic education, it is difficult to expect the poorest and those in real need to begin to fend for themselves.

We must agree on a new paradigm for global economic trade. Global equilibrium requires that States with a high surplus of exports over imports begin to switch to growth, stimulated by internal consumption. Incidentally, it was domestic demand that saved Poland from the economic crisis following 2008. If we fail to balance the relationship between these two groups of economies — export- and import-oriented — there will be more turbulence in the global system. Developing countries must increasingly take responsibility for the global economy. This includes responsibility for the least developed countries, which cannot be limited to imports, as this prevents the development of their own manufacturing and export potential. United Nations agencies and entities not related to the Organization, such as the WTO, must assist in the evolution of this paradigm.

The issue of international security, in both its broader and narrower senses, requires a new approach. Here I shall confine myself to the latter. Poland has a strong interest in progress in the reduction of nuclear and conventional arms. We are concerned about the

prospect of returning to the arms race, as well as by the increase in spending on armaments on a global scale. More attention should be paid to the categories of weapons that today account for the most deaths. They cause conflicts, mainly internal, and they are the main factors of instability in various regions of the world. It is from that perspective that we should reform the United Nations Conference on Disarmament. We fully support the efforts of the Secretary-General to that end.

Security in a broad sense and respect for human rights and the various forms of a transition towards democracy, that is, ultimately building a lasting peace, depends on the ability to communicate, to negotiate and to compromise. In that respect, the role of the United Nations is irreplaceable. The United Nations has been, is and must remain the main forum and instrument for international mediation. We in Poland and Europe know from our own experience the value of this way of resolving difficult social and political problems. The Polish round table of 1989 paved the way for transformation in our part of Europe. I am convinced of its usefulness in the process of the Arab Spring, particularly with respect to the difficult situation that arose in Syria, a country of great Islamic culture and tradition. We are ready to share this experience with the societies that would like to do so. Mediation is an irreplaceable way to achieve lasting and just peace.

This also applies to solving very difficult problems in the relations between Israel and its neighbours, especially with the Palestinian Authority. I urge the United Nations and the Secretary-General to actively use this means of building trust and peace between peoples, cultures and different social groups who frequently, and for legitimate reasons, find themselves in a situation of conflict or even war.

The spirit of solidarity must permeate the activity of our Organization, which aims for peace, security, development and respect for human rights. *Si vis pacem para solidaritatem* (*A/55/PV.17, p. 32*) are words expressed here in 2001 by former Auschwitz prisoner and Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs Wladyslaw Bartoszewski. The spirit of solidarity has been the source of Polish success since 1989, and continues to be a value and source of strength for the entire European Union. Nevertheless, it also continues to be needed on a global scale at this time of openness and interdependence between countries, economies and societies. This requires an awareness of the unity of humankind and a consciousness of the deep commonality of interests among the members of the international community. The failure to respect this will mean failure to effectively take on the challenges the international community faces. In that regard, I have only highlighted a few examples.

Finally, being here, I cannot resist recalling the important words of my great compatriot, Pope John Paul II. Speaking in the Hall in October 1995, he said:

> "The answer to the fear which darkens human existence at the end of the century is the common effort to build a civilization of love, founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice and liberty. And the soul of the civilization of love is the culture of freedom: the freedom of individuals and the freedom of nations, lived in self-giving solidarity and responsibility." (*A/50/PV.20, p. 6*)

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Poland for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bronislaw Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Kenya.

Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kibaki: I take this opportunity to once again congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I am confident that his long years of diplomatic service and experience will be crucial in steering the work of this session to a complete success. Allow me to also congratulate His Excellency

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his re-election to a second term. This demonstrates our collective trust and confidence in his leadership.

The twenty-first century presents us with new and complex security challenges arising, among other things, from a range of political, economic, financial and environmental factors. This session of the General Assembly offers opportunities to address the challenges that we face collectively. Most significant is the promotion of mediation as a tool for conflict management and the peaceful settlement of disputes between and within States.

In that context, the role of regional organizations in the mediation and resolution of conflicts is of increasing importance. On the African continent, the African Union (AU) and regional organizations such as the East African Community and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) continue to serve as significant building blocks in the search for global peace and security. As the Assembly is aware, IGAD is at the forefront of efforts to bring peace to Somalia and the Sudan. I am pleased that Kenya's role in both cases has been, and remains, crucial.

On 9 July, we witnessed the birth of a new nation, South Sudan. I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate and welcome the Republic of South Sudan to the community of nations. The independence of South Sudan and its entry into the United Nations family is the result of intense negotiations under IGAD, safeguarded by the AU and the international community. This success story exemplifies the potential of regional organizations to resolve complex and deep-rooted conflicts. I would like to reiterate Kenya's continued commitment to engage with both the Sudan and South Sudan, through IGAD as well as bilaterally, in their efforts to resolve the outstanding issues under the just concluded Comprehensive Peace Agreement. I am confident that the leadership of both the Sudan and South Sudan will continue to demonstrate their commitment, courage and resolve in that effort. We will also maintain active support for the African Union High-level Implementation Panel on the Sudan, led by former President Thabo Mbeki.

The recent improvement in the security situation in Mogadishu gives us great optimism. This has been achieved through the concerted efforts of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), supported by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the international community. The exit of Al-Shabaab from Mogadishu provides a unique window of opportunity for the international community to rally behind Somalia and consolidate the gains made thus far. I urge the United Nations and the international community to seize the moment, support IGAD and partner with the TFG in the efforts to restore lasting peace and stability to Somalia.

As a first step, I call upon the international community to enhance the mandate of AMISOM by providing it with the necessary enablers and resources. Only then can AMISOM have the required capacity to extend its coverage and control. In addition, we must support the TFG in the implementation of the Kampala Accord, which spells out a range of political processes necessary for the attainment of sustainable peace and development in Somalia.

The complex challenge of climate change continues to manifest itself in the Horn of Africa. As the General Assembly is aware, the region is currently experiencing the worst drought in 60 years. The drought has resulted in a severe crisis that is affecting more than 12 million people. The region is now suffering from increased environmental stress, the loss of livelihoods and intense competition for scarce resources. Moreover, the situation has sometimes led to armed conflict among neighbouring communities. This reality requires us to enhance the regional capacity for early warning systems and adequate response arrangements.

The scale of climate change and environmental degradation calls for sustained action. In that regard, Kenya hopes that the seventeenth session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Durban, will deliver on African expectations in the form of support for adaptation measures. Furthermore, Kenya believes that the international organizations working on the environment will be streamlined and given sufficient support. In that regard, the transformation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) into a specialized United Nations agency, as recommended by the AU, will be of critical importance. It is my hope that the Rio Summit scheduled for next year in Brazil will endorse this position and upgrade UNEP accordingly.

Finally, I cannot conclude my statement today without once again restating Kenya's position on the

issue of Palestine. Kenya believes in the two-State solution where the territorial integrity of Palestine within the 1967 borders is upheld and the peace and security of Israel are both assured and guaranteed. It is therefore our hope that Palestine will be welcomed into the community of nations with full membership in the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Kenya for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Georgia.

Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Saakashvili: It is of course a great honour and a profound responsibility to address the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly on behalf of my people.

The United Nations is the international community's great legacy of the past century, an institution resulting both from history's most outrageous crimes and from humankind's capacity to confront, reckon with and overcome the consequences of such crimes. Such human contradictions — "the highest heaven and the deepest abyss", to quote Friedrich Schelling — are symbolized by the two remarkable anniversaries we commemorate this year. I am surprised that no one in the Hall has mentioned that this year marks the twentieth anniversary of the collapse of the Soviet Union, which freed captive nations and emancipated oppressed peoples, unleashed the dreams of millions, put an end to decades of cold war and an apocalyptic nuclear race and heralded a new era of international relations. It was clearly not, as one nostalgic leader put it, the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century. Nor was it, as some analysts and diplomats dreamed, the end of history.

Ten years later, in this very city, another major event took place, this time a real catastrophe. It reminded us in the most horrific way that history was not over and that it remained tragic. On that terrible day, even those who had failed to pay heed to a decade of grim wars in the Balkans and the Caucasus, in Africa and in Afghanistan, had to abandon their illusions that a new world order free of conflicts had emerged for good.

The attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., were not aimed at a single country, but instead targeted a set of values and a way of life — freedom and democracy. That day, 11 September 2001, reminded us that the world remained a true battlefield — a battlefield not among religions, as many people claim, or of nations, but a battlefield within every religion, every nation and every culture; a battlefield between those who try to build and those who seek to destroy, between those who choose freedom and those who pledge to eradicate it; a battlefield between nihilism and the very idea of civilization.

Ten years later, the remarkable upheavals in the Arab world have offered us yet more proof that there is no end to history, nor is there a clash of civilizations. Instead, a universal call to freedom is rising even in places where some doubted it could ever rise. It is being met by a monstrous effort to quell it. As we speak, the highest heaven and the deepest abyss are once again in conflict. It is our duty as leaders to weigh in and speak out, to decide and to act.

The first anniversary I evoked earlier — the fall of Soviet tyranny — continues to reverberate today in important ways. When the moment came 20 years ago for us, the former subjects of the Soviet bureaucracy — students, artists, dissidents, workers, men and women, old and young — it was hardly the end of history; on the contrary, it was a new beginning of history. Communism had frozen our will in a cold and closed museum. When it collapsed, the doors of history swung open again. We found ourselves confronted at once by both the best and the worst. The best transpired for those nations quickly integrated into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The others — like the people of my country, Georgia —

were left to the mercy of failed States, civil unrest, wars, ethnic cleansing and foreign occupation.

Two years ago, from this very podium, I suggested that there were two ways to leave communism behind and to re-enter history — the way of Vaclav Havel and the way of Slobodan Milošević, the way of liberal democracy and tolerance, on one side, and the way of authoritarianism and ethnic nationalism, on the other. There are, in other words, men who embrace freedom and men who erect mental and physical walls against it.

To the latter, who still see the extension of the European Union and NATO as a threat, I would like to say that the Cold War ended in December 1991 and that they should not be afraid of having democratic neighbours who wish to join wider democratic clubs. There is no hidden agenda or secret plot in any of those capitals to undermine the sovereignty of big nations. The Cold War ended 20 years ago and, slowly — too slowly — new rules are emerging. And even those rules are still too rarely applied.

Little by little, tyrants are beginning to fear that they could one day be held accountable for their crimes. I am convinced that there will be less and less tolerance for the ethnic cleansing and other war crimes that have stained my country and so many others. That is the very reason for the existence as the United Nations, is it not? The United Nations exists to make the world a little better, to finally enforce the rules, charters, laws and principles upon which we have all come to agree.

It is time to understand that the world has changed and that an army, as powerful as it might seem, cannot ultimately deny the will of the people; that a Government, as strong as it might look, cannot unilaterally and freely dismember sovereign nations; and that we are not in 1938 or in 1968, but in 2011.

As I speak, the Russian Federation militarily occupies 20 per cent of sovereign Georgian territory, in violation of international law and the 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement. As I speak, almost 500,000 internally displaced persons and refugees in a country of less than 5 million people continue to suffer because they are denied their right, a right reaffirmed over a dozen times by this very body, to return to their homes and villages. They cannot go back because, in Moscow, a foreign leader has decided that their home is no longer their home.

To such cynicism and brutality we respond with calls for justice and commitments to peace. Last year, on 23 November, I addressed the European Parliament and solemnly pledged that Georgia would never use force to liberate those of its regions currently occupied by the Russian Federation. Even though the United Nations Charter gives us the authority to do so, as we well know, we definitively renounced military means to restore our territorial integrity. The commitment I made before the European Parliament is legally binding; I have sent relevant letters to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to other international organizations.

It will soon be one year since Georgia renounced the use of force. One year has passed, and we are still waiting for Russia's leadership to reciprocate this gesture of peace. Unfortunately, instead of dialogue, the response we have received has come in the form of a dozen terrorist acts targeting Georgia, attacks directly organized and supervised by confirmed officers of the Russian secret services, which has been authenticated by different international actors.

The Cold War is over, but some leaders have yet to realize that fact and stop reasoning in terms of spheres of influence, near-abroad domination and zero-sum games. The Cold War is over, but embargoes, blackmail and brutal diktats are still used against Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus. The Cold War is over, but even the Baltic States have to deal with manipulation of their democratic political landscape and neo-colonial games with their minorities. The Cold War is over, but the old Soviet habit of playing on ethnic and religious hatreds is still alive. That is especially true in the black hole that the North Caucasus has become, with brutal violence, displacement and the killing of hundreds of thousands of inhabitants.

Georgia is responding to these brutal and dangerous policies by opening its borders, inviting people to come to engage in exchange, debate and dialogue, by trying to overcome the information blockades, by trying to rebuild bridges between nations — those essential bridges that others are systematically trying to destroy. Georgia is responding to military build-up with programmes to lift children out of poverty through access to modern technologies — computers, the Internet — and with new hotels and new boulevards and cycling paths. Georgia is responding to methods of the past by embracing the

promises of the future, and many others as well — new health-care systems, hundreds of new hospitals, advanced programmes to deal with communicable and non-communicable diseases, and insurance for all.

The end of the Cold War launched an era of opportunity and turbulence, liberating local dynamics in ways both tragic and exultant, and leading to a constant flux in the world order. It has unleashed hatred, ethnic conflict, mass terror, genocide and many other human calamities. But it has also generated fantastic emancipations.

Think of the "coloured" revolutions in Eastern Europe, the dazzling development of Asia, the progress of democracy in Africa or, more recently, the Arab Spring; none would have been possible if the Soviet Union still existed as a global player and a global threat to all the continents, including Africa, Asia and Europe alike. Since 1991, history has become more and more unpredictable, swinging violently between the highest heaven and the deepest abyss that Schelling referred to. Indeed, who could have anticipated the global consequences of a desperate act by a 26-year-old Tunisian, Mohamed Bouazizi, in the remote town of Sidi Bouzid?

One poor man, in an unknown place, was denied his rights by an imperious police and, like a distant echo of the Czech Jan Palach in front of the Russian tanks in 1968, he immolated himself. This breathtaking act of despair has literally turned the world upside down.

Some dictators are jailed or on the run; regimes considered untouchable have collapsed; new constitutions and orders are being born. An entire region and culture derogatorily labelled as unfit for democracy by some people in more developed countries has given the whole world, including the developed world, a lesson in freedom.

Such historical eruptions always come as a surprise. They require from us all the radical astonishment that Aristotle considered as the very beginning of philosophy, the first step towards true wisdom and a radical emancipation from our prejudices and dogmas.

Very few predicted the revolutions that swept across Eastern and Central Europe in 1989, or the "coloured" revolutions that followed 15 years later. Even fewer predicted Tunis, Cairo, Benghazi and Tripoli. The popular call for freedom that has shaken the world in 2011 is the best and most definitive answer to the hatred that motivated the attacks against this very city 10 years ago.

When aspiring populations are free to live their lives, practice their trades, raise their children, voice their ideas and press their grievances, the space for terrorists to recruit or demagogues to sow ethnic hatred starts to evaporate.

International police, military and intelligence cooperation in the war against Al-Qaida over the past decade have been, and still are, essential in protecting our freedoms. I am proud that Georgia has borne more than its share in the international effort in Afghanistan. I am proud of our thousands of soldiers who risk everything in order to defeat the international movement of hatred — and I want to pay tribute to those who have died on the battlefield. I am proud of our police who are engaged in the struggle against nuclear trafficking. I am proud that Georgia has become a provider, not just a consumer, of international security.

I am proud of all of this, but I am also very aware that extremism will not be defeated and terrorism will not be eradicated by military and police means alone. Terrorism and extremism can be defeated only if freedom, democracy and prosperity extend their reach in the world.

This is why we welcomed so genuinely the efforts of President Obama and President Rousseff in launching the Open Government Partnership. The world has to respond to the universal call for freedom and justice, and only a coordinated response to this call can guarantee our common long-term security.

Georgia is ready and willing once again to take on more than its share in this international effort. Our experience of radical post-revolutionary transformation over the past eight years could very well be useful for the newly liberated lands.

We were not always free. We were a totally failed State, a dying economy, a country destroyed by corruption and authoritarian structures. In 2003, a peaceful, popular revolution brought to power a young team of reformists. From one day to the next, we were in charge of a fragile country in a hostile geopolitical environment. We discovered quickly that the slogans, roses, flags and other tools we used as opposition and

civil society leaders would no longer suffice. We discovered, in fact, that revolutions are not only, and not even mainly, about the crowds gathered in the streets, but that they consist essentially of the long and difficult process of reform that follows the uprising.

This is the main challenge that Tunisia, Egypt and Libya now face. The uplifting images of people celebrating liberation in Tahrir Square, or Libyan citizens dancing in Muammar Al-Qadhafi's palaces, are already in the past. The success of those revolutions will depend on what happens after the legions of reporters from CNN, the BBC and Al-Jazeera have left.

This is precisely the moment when our Georgian experience — both successes and shortcomings — could prove useful. Of course we hardly succeeded in everything, and we made many mistakes. But we have also had astonishing results.

In the aftermath of the Rose Revolution, we fired 100 per cent of our entire police force. Georgia lived for three months without a single policeman. Amazingly, during that period, crime rates went down dramatically. Why? Not only because the police were responsible for a large part of our crime rate, but also because there was a shared feeling that our citizens finally had a stake in their country and that they were living actors in a very specific moment of our nation's history — a moment when everything seemed possible, when values became the basis of politics and when one had the feeling of inventing one's own future. This feeling is the true engine of history and our best ally against extremists. But it is a fragile feeling that has to be nurtured and sustained.

In Georgia, we have managed to keep this feeling alive until now by a permanent process of reform with clear benchmarks. Thanks to radical changes in our police force, customs, tax service and bureaucratic structures, and thanks to the widespread feeling among people that they own these transformations, we have made greater progress on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index since 2003 than any other State in the world. We are the second or third least corrupt State in Europe, according to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) survey.

We have built a highly favourable investment climate based on efficiency, transparency and the rule of law. As a result, we are now ranked as one of the easiest places in the world to do business. The World Bank ranked Georgia, based on five years of records, as the world's number one economic reformer. No other country has progressed in that five-year period as we did. We are ranked first in Eastern and Central Europe in terms of business, as I said, as one of the easiest places in the world.

The 2011 EBRD survey on countries in transition singles out Georgia as the most successful country in our region in terms of institution-building, on par with developed European countries.

There is still a lot to be done, obviously. We are more committed than ever to pursuing our path of reforms and to continuing to build our democracy, even as the barrels of hostile tanks point at us just 40 kilometres away from our capital.

Of course, the path to efficient democratic Government is difficult, but it is the only path. Of course, people will be impatient and disappointed, but there is no alternative to the success of this call for freedom. This is why it is so important to support this call and to deter those who want to suppress it.

This is why we supported the NATO-led intervention in Libya at the initiative of the United Kingdom, France and the United States. The very fact that the National Transitional Council is now sitting here, in the Hall, and that Al-Qadhafi can no longer speak from this rostrum should give hope for the future to all of us. The very fact that this effort was approved by the Security Council has shown that that institution can actually be the essential framework for the defence of human rights.

The two anniversaries we are marking — the anniversary of the fall of the Soviet empire and the anniversary of 9/11 — continue to confront us with this central question: how can we ensure that the new spaces that have opened in our world in the past 20 years thanks to the fall of dictators and thanks to the spread of new technologies are filled by peace rather than violence, by tolerance rather than extremism and by freedom rather than new forms of enslavement?

History will judge our generation by how actively we help to answer this question, particularly in a series of pivotal arenas, in what people call abusively frozen conflicts in and near my own region, in the many countries in the international community that remain under tyranny's yoke and in the places like those Arab

States that have achieved a new spring of freedom and are starting the difficult work of reforms.

Wael Ghonim, the young Egyptian Google executive who helped connect and mobilize so many of his country's people to stand up for freedom, recently said that the new revolutions, like the one his country experienced, are a little like Wikipedia: they are grand, open projects to which everyone can contribute.

The need for participation applies to us as well. As national leaders and as key decision-makers, we can contribute and we must contribute. Let us rise to that historical imperative. Let us all make our contribution, so that, together, we may avoid the deepest abyss and strive instead for the highest heaven.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Georgia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Fernández Reyna (*spoke in Spanish*): We extend our warmest congratulations to the Ambassador from Qatar, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, on his recent election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. We welcome his intention to use this session to address pressing issues such as mediation and conflict resolution, the reform of the United Nations system, preventing and responding to natural disasters and sustainable development for global prosperity.

Ten years ago, the dynamic and vibrant city of New York was shocked by something previously inconceivable: the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers. Thousands of innocent people died in horrific ways, leaving relatives and friends in a state of helplessness and sorrow. Echoes of that terror reverberated around the planet, leaving scars and a trail of pain to this day. The world has not been the same since then.

In the interest of security, even in strong democracies where genuine rule of law prevails, some individual liberties, previously considered sacred and immutable, have been sacrificed. While the ashes were still smouldering and the rubble of the Twin Towers still lay where it fell, the war in Afghanistan was launched, which, although perhaps justified as a case of legitimate defence, has nevertheless produced more victims than the terrorist attacks themselves. Then came the occupation of Iraq, which spurred controversy in various circles of international public opinion but in any case certainly generated more violence, produced new victims and new waves of human suffering and caused more destruction of wealth.

The lesson to be learned from these past 10 years is that there must be a collective effort to eliminate terrorism as an inhuman practice, to eliminate as well the economic, social, political, cultural, ideological and religious factors that fuel it, and to promote a world that is more open, more tolerant, more respectful and more willing to engage in dialogue and in the recognition of human dignity.

Another event that has shaken the world during the past decade has been the global financial crisis, produced by a lack of clear rules in the international financial system, as well as by arrogance, greed and the unquenchable thirst for wealth. That crisis has gone through several stages, but at this moment what is most worrisome is that it has caused a division among the most influential and powerful political and economic sectors in the world over strategies to fix it. While some think that what is needed at this time is public-spending stimulus policies to promote economic growth and job creation, others emphasize reducing fiscal deficits and paying off sovereign debt.

How can international capital markets now demand that Governments pay a debt that was created, to a large extent, to save financial institutions from going under in the first place? Although incongruous,

that is exactly what is taking place. Markets are currently putting pressure on States to pay sovereign debts that were themselves essentially the result of earlier initiatives by States to rescue banks that were either at risk or on the brink of bankruptcy.

In order to avoid having to stop payments or defaulting and watching their economies crumble further, Governments have had to give in to the pressure of the markets by implementing severe austerity measures. Those policies have significantly decreased citizens' quality of life, leading to social unrest and protest movements that erode Governments' legitimacy and support base. Although it might seem paradoxical, in some developed countries loss of popular support has caused Governments to fall, which, in echoes of coups d'état, have led to a new political phenomenon that might be called, for lack of a better word, market "coups".

What is strange about this situation is that what we need is resources to save the international financial system, stabilize the world economy and return us to our earlier levels of economic growth and prosperity — and those resources are at hand. For example, it is known that even though $4 trillion circulate every day around the world in the form of financial transactions in capital markets, no taxes are in place that would increase States' fiscal resources.

How much would Governments collect through a 5 per cent tax on the $4 trillion circulating daily around the world? That would represent $20 billion per day, which, multiplied by five business days a week, would come to a total of $100 billion. If, in turn, we multiply that number by four weeks a month we would have monthly income of $400 billion. And those $400 billion monthly, multiplied by 12 months in a year, amount to an astronomical $4.8 trillion. That amount would not only resolve the problems of some countries' sovereign debt but there would be enough fresh resources for investing, which would allow a rapid recovery from the current financial and economic world crisis.

Nonetheless, were we to conclude that this was not an appropriate way for States to raise revenue, what about the more than 10 trillion dollars deposited in tax havens, according to reports by international advisory institutions?

As we know, not a cent from those deposits, which increase by more than 600 billion dollars every year, reaches the tax services of any Government.

In the meantime, through our failure to tax international financial transactions and the deposits made in tax havens, the global financial and economic crisis continues, citizens become indignant as they see their standard of living erode, social demonstrations multiply, Governments are threatened by the lack of governance, chaos takes over societies, and uncertainty expands everywhere.

In sum, we are forced to accept increasingly alarming levels of social injustice because of the undeniable and uncontrollable power held by a circle of the world's economic elite.

Despite the wide range of global problems before us, I wish to address just one of them: financial speculation on the price of food and oil. The Dominican Republic will submit a draft resolution on the subject to this Assembly General.

Since 2005 there has been a steady increase in the prices of food and oil, along with that of petroleum by-products.

From 2006 to 2008, the price of soya beans has increased 107 per cent; the price of corn, 125 per cent; rice, 127 per cent; and wheat, 136 per cent.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), as a result of those price increases, 150 million people joined those around the world who already literally go hungry.

As a result, for the first time in the history of humankind, the total number of people who lack access to food surpassed 1 billion, which represents almost a sixth of the world population.

With the recession that took place during the second half of 2008, food prices went down, and it was thought that we would return to a situation of accessible food prices and overall increased stability.

However, with the slight upturn and reactivation of the world economy in 2010, prices went up again, and this year the ravages of inflation have been felt once again in different parts of the world.

The same has happened with the price of oil. After falling to $12 a barrel in 1998, ten years later, in July 2008, two months before the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers, it was priced at $147 a barrel.

Paradoxically, at the end of 2008, oil prices had dropped so precipitously that the new price on the international market was $37 a barrel.

Who could possibly explain something as absurd as a price drop from $147 to $37 a barrel in just four months?

It has been argued that, with regard to both food and oil, those exorbitant price increases can be explained by the growth of the world population, an increase in demand from emerging economies, especially China and India, the effects of climate change, and geo-political tensions in regions of the world affected by conflict.

There can be no doubt that some of those factors have influenced prices to some extent, but there has also been a clear effort to downplay the importance of a new element in international markets: financial speculation in commodity futures.

According to well-known international analysts, 30 to 40 per cent of the price increases for commodities or basic products can be ascribed to the impact or influence of financial speculation on futures contracts.

In light of that situation, which has a daily impact on our food- and oil-importing people, the Dominican Republic has weighed the need to propose regulatory measures of international scope in order to guarantee market transparency and price stability.

To that end, it is essential to limit the volume of transactions that may be executed by such futures market participants as insurance companies, investment banks, pension funds and equity funds, among others, which play no direct part in the physical production of the product.

Likewise, deposits on futures contracts should be raised, as a way to discourage speculative transactions that only contribute to price volatility and create uncertainty and a lack of market predictability.

We believe that by adopting such a resolution we will take an important step towards solving a serious problem that has condemned a large part of humankind to hunger and destitution.

In sum, the objective of this initiative is simple, just, and of far-reaching importance, namely, to persuade the Assembly General of the United Nations to declare, for the sake of the human race, that food cannot be considered a financial asset.

Food must be used only to guarantee the survival of the human race on the face of the Earth.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Dominican Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Lionel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ollanta Humala Tasso, President of the Republic of Peru

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Peru.

Mr. Ollanta Humala Tasso, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ollanta Humala Tasso, President of the Republic of Peru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Humala Tasso (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, and to assure him of Peru's firm support in his task.

I would also like to say how pleased I am to be speaking to the world on behalf of the people of Peru from this rostrum that represents multilateralism, peace, solidarity and cooperation, the principles that inspired the birth of this Organization and that Peru fully supports.

The Government I head began its administration only a few weeks ago. Through the ballot box, the people of Peru entrusted us with the task of making a great transformation, one that we have sought for a good part of our history. We intend to make that commitment a reality, out of a sense of responsibility and honour. Our mythical and vibrant nation, possessed of an extraordinary past and a vigorous present, demands that we put an end to centuries of poverty and

exclusion. The great transformation is a process of social inclusion, that is to say, of converting the economic growth that Peruvians have been experiencing for the last 10 years into development; in other words, we must turn money into quality of life.

Our ideal of the great transformation is as impossible to relinquish as is our democratic faith. My Government proposes to deepen our democracy, so that we can respond to the problems and needs of all, not just a minority. In other words, we will democratize democracy. Democracy is the basis of a people's self-determination, and the State must be prepared to faithfully carry out the people's will. That is the foundation of a sovereign democracy. In order to fulfil that commitment, the State must be the institution responsible for shaping the path to transformation through public policies in both the political and economic spheres. The State must act in the interests of the people.

The United Nations is the greatest guarantee we have for preserving peace, and it is made up of our States. Today, however, we know that there are companies that have as much power as or greater power than many States, and that can react rapidly via the networks of the Internet and the stock market to put States themselves in the dock of the accused. That situation must be taken into account in order to safeguard State policies concerning issues such as the preservation of the environment, respect for peoples' self-determination and the rights of indigenous communities and social minorities, among others.

We cannot consider the possibility of transformation outside the rule of law and its values. This is not a question of copying others' models. We will govern by consensus, both at home and abroad, protecting all our freedoms with tolerance and, above all, by listening to our citizens, without regard to class, race or gender. When I took office I quoted Nelson Mandela, who said that there is no democracy with poverty, and no democracy with social inequality. Our Government seeks a State that can regain the ability to promulgate policies that respond to the needs and aspirations of all its citizens. It is in that spirit that we are renewing our commitment to the Millennium Development Goals.

Latin America is the most unequal region in the world. Its political class cannot say that the dream of those who established our independence and founded the republics of today, has come true. In most cases, values such as liberty, equality and fraternity were the banners of our founders. However, extreme interpretations of those values have led to a world of great confrontations, without really advancing liberty or equality. Let us now strengthen fraternity as a path to lasting peace. In that regard, I would like, from this rostrum, to take the opportunity to recognize the Palestinian State and its right to live in peace and harmony alongside other countries of the United Nations.

Today the integration of a geographically fragmented and scattered nation is possible, thanks to advances in communications and physical infrastructure. Social inclusion also demands quality public services and equality of opportunity. Citizens need access to health, education, housing, decent jobs and social security. We are talking about full integration within Peruvian society. We are vigorously promoting exchanges between our communities, and we acknowledge and seek to re-evaluate our diversity.

We want a State that is responsive to the needs of its citizens and communities. That is its primary role. The exploitation of non-renewable sovereign resources, which Peru is rich in, should serve the country's development. Investment projects should respect both the human and the natural environments in which they take place. This is already being made clear to investors through a negotiation process that my Government has undertaken within the framework of the rule of law. Thanks to those negotiations, the State and our communities will have greater resources available for social investment projects. That will enable us to promote social cohesion and democratic stability, and, at the same time, the more favourable investment environment that the country needs. One of the first measures we took was to enact a law on prior consultation, through which we can respond to the demands of our indigenous communities, involving them in decisions that concern them. In that way we are affirming that every Peruvian is a first-class citizen, and we are fulfilling a commitment made by Peru in compliance with Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization concerning indigenous and tribal peoples.

Drug trafficking is one of the world's most serious issues. It is essential that we recognize the fact that this major problem has not been overcome; worse, its power and influence are growing every day.

Acknowledging this reality is an important step, which will enable us to re-establish an integrated policy, working together with stakeholders and giving equal importance to both controlling supply and reducing demand. For Peru, these principles also involve States' duty to act decisively and cooperatively in order to combat every link in that criminal chain. Coca production is a source of income for tens of thousands of people who cannot always rely on a viable alternative for survival. My Government is working to achieve a situation in which anti-drug policies lead to the eradication of illegal coca crops, and is also considering the need to include peasant farmers in alternative development programmes. Unless we do, eradication will simply be insufficient to achieve our objectives. We must act more vigorously in combating the transnational criminal organizations that are the main beneficiaries of this illegal trade. Those organizations employ thousands of people and exploit the poverty and vulnerabilities of States in areas where access is difficult.

At the same time, we require greater financial knowledge in order to detect money-laundering activities and more effective controls over supplies and precursors. In the context of security, we must control the supply of weapons that the cartels and criminal gangs use daily against citizens.

In the second quarter of next year, we will convene in Lima a meeting of ministers for foreign affairs, and heads of organizations responsible for combating drugs in order to address these issues and define specific measures. My Government will spare no effort in combating the drug trade and organized crime.

Peru is a multicultural country that is in the process of recognizing the wealth of its own diversity. For example, our country today is undergoing a gastronomical revolution that has revealed that diversity contributes to social inclusion and sustainable development. Peruvian cooking is an area in which all Peruvians — from the peasant and the cook to the fisherman and the tradesman — can participate together. It is based on a millennial dialogue among many cultures — indigenous, African, European, Arab and Asian — that is represented today in our cuisine. For that reason, we have called on UNESCO to recognize Peruvian cooking as a representative element of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Technological and scientific progress has grown exponentially over the past 50 years. Currently, however, there has been a parallel growth of global exclusion. This is seen not only in the lack of access to technology, but also in the mass migrations of people seeking better opportunities abroad. Those people, who are known as illegals, are in fact a bridge for integration. However, in many cases the needs that motivate them to move abroad lead to violations of their human rights. I take this opportunity to call for fairer and more dignified treatment for peoples who contribute through their work to the economies of their countries of origin and of residence. Their marginalization this will push them into informal economies run by mafias and criminal networks.

With respect to social inclusion, my Government is prioritizing the needs of the most fragile and vulnerable, such as children and the elderly. However, we are also concerned with the need to protect the rights of women, who have historically been victims of discrimination. In this regard, I note the positive decision to create UN-Women. We call on the international community to work together to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. We also reiterate our commitment to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, whose tenth anniversary we celebrate today.

The effects of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions are being felt in the most vulnerable social sectors yet affect us all, rich and poor alike. In the context of the global attempt to preserve the planet, we must all be committed. In Peru, we are working to promote the use of clean energy through reforestation, environmental education and recognition of the right of participation and access of communities that possess traditional knowledge. That will require a large amount of resources and technology that are more abundant in the northern hemisphere. Therefore, we reaffirm the principle of shared but differentiated responsibility between developed countries and developing countries. International cooperation must enhance the level of financial and technical assistance to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Industrialized countries must assume and fulfil the commitment to significantly reduce their carbon emissions. On 28 July in Lima, the Heads of States of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR)

called attention to the threats posed to our economies by situations that originated in the United States, Europe and Asia, linked to the high level of public debt and unemployment and the slow recovery of credit markets and investment. Of course, is the situation is also due to military ambitions that have diverted vast amounts of money that could have been used to prevent these crises.

Latin American countries are learning how to overcome our chronic vulnerability in the face of these crises. We have decided to work together, coordinating our policies to enhance the economic underpinnings of our countries and the monitoring of our financial systems. We have established the South American Council of Economy and Finance, reflecting our capacity to encourage dialogue and establish consensus to the benefit of all.

Latin America will not be spared the problems that have affected the North. We are making preparations. It is not enough to be linked to one another, we must be united. The twenty-first century may well be the moment for this part of the continent and its great market of more than 700 million people. Our commitment to integration, peace and regional progress is not rhetorical. For the Peruvian Government, integration with our neighbouring countries is a priority instrument for promoting security and development for all throughout South America and Latin America. This is in line with of the affirmation that the path to peace and reconciliation requires an end to the blockade on Cuba.

As Víctor Andrés Belaúnde said on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly in 1959:

> "In centuries gone by, the arrogant will to power prevailed. Today mankind not only yearns to, but must, live in a world ruled by justice." (*A/PV.795, para. 33*)

The interdependence of our societies is a fact. It is not necessary to create further divisions. When making decisions, we must learn to talk to one another and to involve the viewpoints of the many actors of the international system. Peru reasserts its full support for enlarging the Security Council to make it more representative and enhance its legitimacy.

It is urgent to also advance reform of the Economic and Social Council in order to make it a genuine, fundamental forum for the development of all peoples of the world.

The priority we give to regional integration in no way implies that ours is closed regionalism. That would be anachronistic in a globalized world. Although our foreign policy is based on brotherhood in South America and Latin America, we will not neglect our political, trade and cooperation relations with other regions of the globe. On the contrary, our regionalism will provide a platform to bring us closer, in a more articulated and proactive way, with other regions of the world.

Our participation in multilateral forums will increase in coherence. Global political stability requires intergovernmental organizations and strong regional groups that are capable of maintaining that multipolar order that is emerging in our world.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Peru for the statement he has just made.

> *Mr. Ollanta Humala Tasso, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

Address by Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

> *Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Grybauskaitė: Twenty years ago, Lithuania rejoined the international community of sovereign States and became a Member of the United Nations. The unique experience of peaceful transition, State-building and reforms during the past 20 years has made Lithuania stronger and more determined. History has taught us that an honest broker at the national,

bilateral or multilateral level is the key to solving almost any problem.

In recent years, we have invested in building our capacity to become such a broker. Lithuania has just concluded its chairmanship of the Community of Democracies. Today, we are proud to chair the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. I am also confident that Lithuania's commitment to effective multilateralism and the fostering of dialogue and cooperation internationally makes it a deserving candidate for non-permanent membership of the Security Council. We are ready and determined to run for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council for the 2014-15 term.

Meanwhile, looking forward to Lithuania's presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session next year, I would like to assure members that we will do our utmost to contribute effectively and wisely to the work and principles of the United Nations in all of its bodies.

Just a few months ago, women leaders from all parts of the world met in Vilnius to share their experiences in enhancing democracy worldwide. This event, organized by Lithuania as Chair of the Community of Democracies, confirmed my belief that the involvement of women in addressing common problems and concerns is still very low. Therefore, Lithuania strongly welcomed resolution 65/283 on strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution, proposed by Finland and Turkey and adopted by the General Assembly. I am very pleased that that resolution advocates the enhanced role of women in peace mediation. The full involvement of women in conflict resolution, peace talks and decisions on post-conflict reconstruction is essential.

The same applies to the protection of women in conflict situations as defined in the historic Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions. I would like to announce that Lithuania has drawn up its first national action plan for implementing resolution 1325 (2000).

We live in an era of constant change. The maintenance and improvement of our ability to tackle traditional crises must be supplemented with an increased capacity of the United Nation to address such new threats and challenges as energy security, cybercrime, food safety and climate change, to mention only a few. I especially appreciate and would like to stress the importance of the Secretary-General's strong engagement in nuclear safety and his call to build a stronger connection between nuclear safety and nuclear security.

In the light of the world's energy needs today, nuclear energy can be an essential element of sustainable global development, provided it is used with necessary responsibility. I would like to draw the Assembly's special attention to the word "responsibility". Chernobyl and Fukushima are tragic examples, but they teach us very important lessons. It is not enough to rely only on recommendations, proposals and encouragement for cooperation when we deal with nuclear safety issues. I believe that our responsibility is to create strict legal international imperatives. We cannot allow any compromises on safety and security.

In this respect, the efforts of the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the European Union and other organizations to ensure nuclear safety throughout the world are critically needed today. Lithuania emphasizes the key role of the IAEA in this area. We welcome the ambitious nuclear safety action plan that was adopted by the IAEA General Conference in Vienna today.

Lithuania believes that strict adherence to uniform nuclear safety standards must be obligatory. Specialized Agency missions for the entire nuclear cycle, including site evaluation and follow-up missions, should also become an inseparable part of any nuclear power plant development. Each and every nuclear power plant, its site, nuclear technology and even the ability of the personnel to ensure safety maintenance should be subject to stress tests. Last but not least, information about all existing and planned nuclear projects must be absolutely transparent and open to public access.

We believe that the nuclear security summit in the Republic of Korea next year will provide an excellent platform for discussing nuclear safety and security issues for the whole world. With a view to that forthcoming summit, Lithuania is ready to contribute to the practical measures set forth in the 2010 Nuclear Security Summit Work Plan.

The prevention of any type of crisis — be it a military conflict, a nuclear accident or a terrorist attack — is a challenge for all of us. But it is also an

opportunity: an opportunity to strengthen the United Nations leadership, an opportunity to intensify our joint work, an opportunity to promote dialogue and mediation, and even an opportunity to save resources that can then be devoted to research and development, protection of the environment and support for the most vulnerable. I invite us all to seize that opportunity for the sake of our common safety, security and prosperity, which is what we all wish for.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Lithuania for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mugabe: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Al-Nasser on his election as President of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. My delegation is confident that under his able leadership the General Assembly will successfully address the pressing issues on the agenda of the current session. I also wish to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss, for having successfully steered the proceedings of this House during the sixty-fifth session.

I wish also to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, on his reappointment for a second term. We remain hopeful that the Secretary-General will strive to shepherd the United Nations with an open, transparent and inclusive multilateral approach. Such an approach, I believe, would renew and revive the hopes and expectations of developing countries in the efficacy of this world body. Zimbabwe places its hopes in a United Nations that recognizes the equality of sovereign States as enshrined in the founding Charter.

I want to express my heartfelt congratulations to the Republic of South Sudan on its attainment of independence and its subsequent admission as the 193rd Member of the United Nations family. As we all congratulate this new nation, Zimbabwe calls upon the international community to render all the necessary support to its Government and its people in tackling the numerous development challenges that lie ahead of them. Zimbabwe stands ready to make its modest contribution to that end.

The theme "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means" is most apt. But how do we, the United Nations Members, measure up in relation to it in our activities here at the United Nations and out there, in the real world? It is my principled view that we must be duty-and honour-bound to operationalize the principles upon which the Charter of the United Nations is based. We must not be guilty of manipulating the Charter to serve our particular or sectional designs and ambitions. The Charter is our set of commandments that must be strictly obeyed by each and every Member if international and regional peace is to be maintained.

We cannot honestly say today that this is the position with regard to NATO States versus Libya. Whatever political disturbances might have first occurred in Benghazi, the process of mediation and peaceful negotiations was never given full play. It was deliberately and blatantly excluded from positively influencing developments. There was quick resort to invoking Chapter VII of the Charter, with a gross, deliberate misinterpretation of the scope of the mandate originally given NATO to oversee and protect civilians.

Bilateral hatreds and quarrels or ulterior motives must not be allowed to creep into the consideration of matters pertaining to threats to international peace and security, or even to the principle of the responsibility to protect.

We have yet to be convinced that the involvement of the mighty Powers in Libya's affairs has not hindered the advent of the process of peace, democracy and prosperity in that sister African country. Our African Union would never have presumed to impose a

leadership on the fraternal people of Libya, as NATO countries have illegally sought to do, and, in fact, have done. At the very least, the African Union would have wished to join those principled members of this body who preferred an immediate ceasefire and peaceful dialogue in Libya. The African Union was and remains fully seized of this crisis and will spare no effort in working to fully complement the United Nations so that peace may return to Libya and its tormented people. We wish that process Godspeed.

The newly minted principle of the responsibility to protect should not be twisted to provide cover for its premeditated abuse in violating the sacred international principle enshrined in the Charter of non-interference in the domestic affairs of States, because to do so amounts to an act of aggression and causes the destabilization of a sovereign State. Moreover, to selectively and arbitrarily apply that principle serves merely to undermine its general acceptability. Indeed, more than other States, all five permanent members of the Security Council bear a huge responsibility in this regard for ensuring that their historical privilege is used more to protect the United Nations Charter than to breach it, as is happening currently in Libya through the blatantly illegal, brutal, callous and murderous NATO bombings. There we see NATO bombing places, seeking out, hunting and hounding the children of Al-Qadhafi. Have the alleged sins of the father now been visited on the sons? Have the children lost their right to life? They are no longer human beings; they are being hunted every day. Or is it because each of them is no longer worth the price of a barrel of oil?

After more than 20,000 NATO bombing sorties that targeted Libyan towns, including Tripoli, there is now an unbelievable and most disgraceful scramble by some NATO countries for Libyan oil, indicating thereby that the real motive for their aggression against Libya was to control and own its abundant fuel resources. What a shame.

Yesterday, it was Iraq, and Bush and Blair were the liars and aggressors as they made unfounded allegations of possession of weapons of mass destruction. This time, it is the NATO countries that are the liars and aggressors, as they make similarly unfounded allegations of destruction of civilian lives by Al-Qadhafi.

When we in Zimbabwe sought to redress the ills of colonialism and racism by fully acquiring our natural resources, mainly our land and minerals, we were and still are subjected to unparalleled vilification and pernicious economic sanctions, the reasons — lies again — alleged to be violations of the rule of law, human rights and democracy, which never, never occurred. My people have condemned these illegal sanctions, and recently more than two million protesters' signatures have demonstrated their antipathy for them. We thank the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the African Union for supporting us and demanding the immediate removal of the illegal sanctions.

We in Africa are also duly concerned about the activities of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which seems to exist only for alleged offenders from the developing world, the majority of them Africans. A blind eye is routinely turned to leaders of the powerful Western States guilty of international crimes, such as Bush and Blair. Such selective justice has eroded the credibility of the ICC on the African continent.

My country continues to work with others for a revitalized General Assembly. However, our ambitions extend to the need to reform the Security Council as well. Africa's call for at least two permanent seats on the Security Council for its members has been constant for decades. Africa cannot remain the only region without permanent membership in the Security Council.

The current global economic crisis and the attendant financial crisis compounds the plight of the most vulnerable, that is, the developing countries. The present international economic and financial architecture has to be reformed and made to respond timeously to the real needs of all our peoples. The situation challenges the ability of our developing world to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

As we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action against racism, xenophobia and other related social ills, let us all recommit ourselves to fighting and defeating these evils.

My country fully supports the right of the gallant people of Palestine to statehood and membership in the Organization. The United Nations must become credible by welcoming into its bosom all those whose right to attain sovereign independence and freedom from occupation and colonialism is legitimate. Let us all accept Palestine as a legitimate State and a Member

of this body. Similarly, the tormented people of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic must not be forgotten. We call for immediate progress in the engagements for a solution to their long-running saga.

The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held later this year, is a pivotal occasion from which we should emerge with agreed measures to address matters of climate change and how to mitigate threats to the very existence of small island States in particular, and to the coastal regions of many heavily populated nations. Zimbabwe will be fully engaged in those negotiations.

Let me reiterate my country's full belief in the aspirations enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We must all resist any abuse to which it may be exposed through the unwelcome behaviour of a few. My country celebrates the UN-Women entity, as it addresses the position of more than half of humankind in all our countries.

The African Union must not be undermined, rather, it should be allowed to complement the efforts of the United Nations for peace and security on the continent. Zimbabwe is a peaceful member of the African Union, SADC, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the Non-Aligned Movement and many other international economic and trade organizations, and thus desires to continue to play its part in creating a peaceful environment in the world. The United Nations can count on the unqualified support of Zimbabwe as required, even if only in our modest way.

I wish the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly every success.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Desiré Delano Bouterse, President of the Republic of Suriname

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Suriname.

Mr. Desiré Delano Bouterse, President of the Republic of Suriname, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Desiré Delano Bouterse, President of the Republic of Suriname, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bouterse: Allow me to join previous speakers in congratulating Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. We welcome his efforts to promote the goals of the United Nations and to act as a bridge between the developed and the developing world. We pledge our full support and cooperation as he steers the work of this session.

I would also like to thank Mr. Joseph Deiss for having guided us with much efficiency through the proceedings of the past session. We wish him well in his future endeavours. To Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has been elected once again at the helm of our Organization, we continue to extend our support and cooperation.

We welcome our newest Member State, the Republic of South Sudan, to the family of nations.

The United Nations was founded on the fundamental belief that collective action can serve our collective security. That steadfast principle is even more essential in addressing the many challenges that threaten world peace today. In Ambassador Al-Nasser's inaugural statement as President, he referred to the enormous political, social, economic and environmental challenges facing the world (see A/65/PV.103).

I could not agree with him more. Pandemics such as AIDS, malaria and non-communicable diseases; threats related to terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, human trafficking, the illicit trade in and use of small arms and light weapons and the illicit drug trade; and the risks posed by climate change and the continuing vulnerability of our women and youth all call upon us to deepen our cooperation and strengthen our international institutions.

Although some citizens in developing countries enjoy good living standards, the realization of sustainable development in many of those countries

remains unattainable. Achieving social justice for all represents the most basic humanitarian challenge of our times. In order to move the world further along the path of compassion, solidarity and shared responsibility, that goal deserves our highest attention.

As the world becomes more intertwined, the impact of climate change in one country or region is affecting the prosperity and security of others as well. As responsible citizens of this precious planet, we must stand united behind the collective goal to preserve our world for current and future generations. Our understanding of climate change suggests that our planet will undergo considerable changes over the next 50 years, impacting all areas of society.

For Suriname, with its low-lying coastline, that means a vulnerable exposure to a rising sea level, risking inundation of our fertile soil and freshwater reservoirs. With 80 per cent of Suriname's population living in the coastal area, our ability to produce food and guarantee food security will be in serious jeopardy. For countries such as ours, it is therefore of paramount importance that the international community honour its commitments, realize the speedy implementation of the Cancún Agreements and honour its pledges to the Special Climate Change Fund and the Adaptation Fund.

We cannot afford for the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference in Durban to fail to produce concrete agreements and targets on reducing emissions, which would lead to a halt or drastically reduce the rising temperature on the planet. We owe that to our present and we owe that to our future generations. We call upon all parties concerned to reach an agreement.

Suriname now stands at a crossroads in its efforts to attain sustainable development. We resolve to promote an investment-friendly environment, with prudent fiscal and monetary policies that are aimed at securing macroeconomic stability in the medium and long terms. Allow me to outline the main objectives of our development strategy. We intend to maintain real economic growth and raise per capita income, while simultaneously promoting a more equitable income distribution. We will further develop the mining sector as the engine of economic growth in the short and medium terms. We plan to move away from a commodity-based economy and focus on the diversification of our economy and increased investment in other sectors, such as the agro-industry, tourism, services, transport, infrastructure and housing. We will invest in our human capital, which is our most important resource. In that context, Suriname will strengthen its national capacities to enhance our the utilization of our abundant natural resources for the benefit of its people.

We are well aware that we cannot move forward in isolation. We recognize the strategic interest of international cooperation to complement national development policies. In that process, we are strongly committed to the objectives of such regional organizations as the Caribbean Community and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR).

Despite the current international financial crisis — which is not of our making — Suriname's present economic outlook remains favourable. Improper management of the world crisis, however, will have negative consequences on our economy. We are pleased with the UNASUR proposal for a complete restructuring of the international financial system, with the participation of all nations in the decision-making process. The time has come to bring an end to the practice of decision-making by only a few, which has had disastrous consequences for the majority of the peoples of the world. For countries such as Suriname, with small, open economies, it remains of vital importance to continue on the path of prudent macroeconomic policies and economic diversification.

Since it is understood that sustainable development can be attained only in a safe environment, it is crucial to preserve international peace and security. Armed conflicts, interference in the domestic affairs of States, terrorism and transnational crime — including drug-related crime and the illegal traffic in and use of small arms and light weapons — only derail our efforts to address the challenges that we are faced with today.

At the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, we are once again called on to reflect on the spirit of our Charter as it relates to the assurance of international peace, security and development. The theme for this session, "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means", is most fitting, since mediation can and should become one of the most effective instruments in international conflict resolution. The failure to recognize and apply the principles of equity and justice in international

relations has resulted in unacceptable situations. Those have brought about extreme poverty, further marginalization, increasingly brutal forms of criminality and destruction of the environment.

At the same time, we increasingly witness acts of war and intervention in many parts of the world. Such armed conflicts are sometimes preceded by a mandate of our very own Security Council, with disregard for the consequences of destruction, loss of life and human suffering. Suriname wishes to draw urgent attention to the stipulations of Article 33 in Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter, which in our opinion have not been consistently applied. That failure has resulted in an unnecessary continuation of violence on the African continent.

I also express concern regarding the situation in Somalia, where severe famine has taken the lives of tens of thousands and continues to be a threat to thousands more. We must ask ourselves if the architects of the acts of war on that same continent — under the pretext of the protection of human rights — could not better have used those precious resources in the fight against famine. Furthermore, the Security Council should be a forum for dialogue and action, fully responsive to current and future global challenges, and should not be permitted to bypass the efforts of regional institutions that aim to promote the peaceful settlement of disputes. In particular, when outbursts of violence occur, peaceful efforts should never be hindered or neglected.

On a special note, it is of great concern that approximately 18 months after the disastrous earthquake in Haiti, the recovery efforts on that island nation are stagnating. We therefore call upon the international community to honour its pledges and continue to support the efforts of the Haitian people to reconstruct their homeland.

Suriname reaffirms the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including the right to an independent State of Palestine, as endorsed by the General Assembly in December 2010 (see resolution 65/202). Suriname has responded to the plight of the Palestinian people and has taken the decision to recognize Palestine as a sovereign State, worthy of becoming a full-fledged Member of this world Organization.

We also reiterate our concern about the persistence of the imposition of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. Those measures continue to cause hardship for the Cuban people and to have adverse effects on the just development of that country. How many more resolutions need to be adopted before justice can be done for the people of Cuba? Suriname once more calls on the States Members of the United Nations to vehemently reject the unilaterally imposed embargo on this nation.

In closing, the provisions and the spirit enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations remain valid as an instrument for promoting international peace, security and development.

As Members, we have the moral obligation to continue to live up to the provisions of our Charter, taking into consideration the demands of changing times in a changing world.

We must, however, ensure that unity and justice reign among all nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Suriname for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Desiré Delano Bouterse, President of the Republic of Suriname, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Gabonese Republic.

Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bongo Ondimba (*spoke in French*): Allow me, first of all, to warmly congratulate the President on his election. His human qualities, along with his experience, will be invaluable throughout this sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. To his predecessor, His Excellency Joseph Deiss, I wish to

express our gratitude for his extremely skilful presidency. I also take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, on his unanimous re-election, and reiterate Gabon's full confidence in him.

Allow me to recall that Gabon has always striven to contribute to peace and the peaceful settlement of conflicts through dialogue and mediation. We firmly believe in the link between peace and security, on the one hand, and development and democracy, on the other. Because the people of Gabon enjoy peace at home, as well as with their neighbours and the world as a whole, we are able to achieve new development goals.

This firm belief, which I proposed to my compatriots when I was elected as head of Government, lies at the heart of Gabon's future vision for development. Since my last statement before the General Assembly a year ago, my Government has moved to take action. We are humbled by the scale of the task and the time required to ensure further progress.

We are already building strategic infrastructure, including preparations for the African Cup of Nations, which Gabon will host in 2012 together with Equatorial Guinea. We are also moving forward with industrial processing projects, beginning with wood, manganese and gas. In addition, we are also making progress with policies to support the service sector. In terms of agriculture, we intend to develop agro-industries, and to support food production and sustainable fishing, which are both so valuable for our food security.

Finally, we are working on a daily basis to implement our steadfast commitment to sustainable development in the context of a green Gabon.

With regard to international peace and security in Africa and throughout the world, Gabon has reiterated its commitment and has contributed according to its means. Since 2010, we have had a non-permanent seat on the Security Council. Last June, Gabon held the Presidency of that body, a role that we discharged with responsibility and commitment.

Turning to Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon has endorsed the actions taken by the United Nations, aimed at respecting the will of the Ivorian people and ensuring the return to a peaceful political environment. We must now support the efforts of the new Government to achieve national reconciliation and reconstruction in our sister country.

With regard to Libya, Gabon has recognized the National Transitional Council and welcomes Libya's return to the African Union and to the international community at the United Nations. In the Security Council, along with the other two African members, we approved resolution 1973 (2011). It was incumbent on the international community to prevent the bloodbath that threatened to take place in Benghazi. We also needed to cut short a conflict that posed great danger to the civilian population. Today, it is important that Libya emerge from this crisis in order to begin reconciliation for all Libyans and the reconstruction of the country. It is with this aim in mind that we took part in the conference of friends of Libya in Paris. We welcome the role played by the United Nations. It is important to work together with the African Union and other stakeholders. We are ready to contribute to the efforts of the international community in Libya.

South Sudan has also joined the international community. Gabon congratulates the authorities of that newborn sister country and assures it of our support. We welcome the clear determination of Sudan and South Sudan to seek a peaceful way to settle their post-referendum issues.

In Somalia, we must act resolutely because of the serious and urgent nature of the situation. Everything must be done to deliver humanitarian aid to those who need it in the towns and villages in Somalia itself. Gabon responded to the appeal of the international community and has made a contribution.

The issue of Palestine affects us all, so far-reaching are its implications for peace in the Middle East and throughout the world. It is important to stress that we all share the goal, which is the existence of two States, Palestine and Israel. On this question, I wish to express my desire, as I did here in this Hall last year and do this year with even greater hope, namely, to see soon a Palestinian State that exists in peace alongside Israel, within secure and recognized borders. The Israeli and Palestinian peoples, both friends of Gabon, aspire to live in peace and security. The peaceful future of these two peoples is essential for the future of the Middle East and for peace in the world.

Syria represents a new situation that requires efforts on all our parts. We hope that the Arab League's

mediation efforts will ensure a peaceful and democratic outcome as a matter of urgency.

Gabon will be particularly attentive to the priority issues throughout this sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. Gabon is, of course, in favour of reform of the Security Council and reform of the United Nations system in general. We must enable our Organization to better discharge its mission of peace, cooperation and justice throughout the world.

Africa should, in a manner that remains to be determined, have a permanent seat in the Security Council. Africa's voice must be heard more on the international stage. This expectation on the part of Africa and even other regions of the world is part of our aspirations for a true democratization of global political and economic governance.

As you know, Gabon is fully committed, including within the framework of the United Nations, to protecting the environment and combating global warming. Since I assumed the highest office in my country, Gabon has taken major steps to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions and to increase the carbon sequestration rate of our forests. My Government has committed itself to modern ways of preserving our tropical forests and biodiversity within our 13 national parks, which cover a little more than 11 per cent of our territory. Gabon has thus launched an extensive campaign to prevent the pillaging of its natural resources and the poaching of its protected species. We are striving to develop our timber industry, while preserving the ecological wealth of our immense tropical forest.

We should also recall that the issues of the environment and international security will face us in the future. At the coming United Nations Climate Change Conference in Durban, in South Africa, we will have to deal with that complex of issues in our work and bear in mind the link that exists between the environment and international security.

Finally, we are closely following the efforts under way to delineate the limits of the continental shelf. Given the potential of undersea resources, we should ensure that their future exploitation does not lead to natural disasters.

Gabon is concerned by the impact of the economic crisis on countries of the South, particularly in terms of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The impact of the international financial crisis on public investment in basic social sectors, such as education, health and the provision of drinking water and electricity, is constraining our efforts to promote human development.

Despite significant progress in implementing the Millennium Development Goals, the deadline of 2015 remains for many countries, including Gabon, a difficult challenge to meet. The Millennium Development Goals cannot be achieved unless additional funds are mobilized before 2015. Development assistance is stagnating, and I see real concern as a result of the situation. The international community must make an effort to live up to the commitments it agreed to in Monterey, Doha, Gleneagles, Paris and Accra. We need a new global partnership for development to ensure lasting economic growth in our countries. Aid should be accompanied by more direct investment and more fair and equitable trade. To mobilize new resources, we encourage and support the efforts under way aimed at institutionalizing innovative mechanisms for funding development.

The President of the General Assembly has asked us to discuss the issue of mediation. This issue is at the heart of the very raison d'être of our Organization, which is to guarantee peace and security throughout the world.

Mediation and conflict prevention must remain our primary means of collective action. We all feel the need, in a complex world, to achieve greater democracy, a world where economic and cultural exchanges are better balanced and where crisis prevention, whether it be of political or other crises, is better organized, with, in particular, better early warning systems and mediation.

Gabon is historically attached to mediation and to the peaceful settlement of disputes. This approach has always been one of the bases of our relations with our neighbouring and brotherly countries in the Central African subregion and has played a part in our contribution to the resolution of conflicts in Africa. My country will never depart from that path, in particular at the very moment when Africa is striving to achieve political and economic integration.

Our commitment to the peaceful settlement of conflicts is also part of the commitments that we have undertaken under a number of conventions and treaties

on human rights, humanitarian law, the promotion of democracy and the rule of law, and international cooperation and solidarity.

We are well aware that mediation has its limits, and the international community must always be ready, if necessary, to consider other ways of ensuring conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Conflicts will be more complex and multidimensional in the future. Economic crises, environmental crises and aspirations for democracy and freedoms, which are taking on new forms, will worsen tensions, and we must follow these developments closely.

Gabon will continue to support and contribute to the mediation efforts and good offices of the Secretary-General on several different fronts and in the various areas of the world where there are conflicts. Those efforts are essential. They must be enhanced by increased resources and be carried out in an impartial way, with full respect for the sovereignty of States. It should also be said that the participation of women is important in all aspects of mediation, since they are always the first victims of conflicts, along with children.

Finally, the United Nations must enhance its cooperation with all the other actors playing a role in this area. In Africa, the African Union, which continues to enhance its mediation capacities, is an essential player.

I would like to conclude by recalling the motto of my vision for our society aimed at making Gabon an emerging country: peace, development and sharing. The climate of peace and stability that Gabon is now enjoying will be invaluable as our country enters a new phase of rapid modernization. More than ever before, Gabon wishes to cooperate with other countries. We are deeply committed to peace. The people of Gabon are therefore ready to exchange, create and build with the rest of the world.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Gabonese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kabila Kabange (*spoke in French*): Allow me, at the outset, to commend the President of the General Assembly and his whole team for their election to the Bureau of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. We would like to express to his predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss, our gratitude for the excellent work he accomplished, work that has benefited our Organization. I also congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General, on the renewal of his mandate.

Taking the floor from this rostrum has always been for me a special moment and a happy occasion to recall some current issues of importance to my country and the world. This moment is all the more special as it comes at a time when the Democratic Republic of the Congo is preparing to hold general elections, the second since those of 2006.

Thus, it is appropriate to grasp the full significance of this key period for the Congo, because it confirms a definitive break from the spiral of violence and instability that has characterized the country in recent decades. It is seen as a decisive phase in that, more than ever, it commits the Congolese people to a lasting democratic culture.

Despite multifaceted challenges punctuating the electoral process, the National Independent Electoral Commission, our people and their Government are doing their utmost to hold transparent and credible elections in a calm climate. The elections are ultimately proof of a return to the effective peace for which Congolese men and women have yearned. Today, peace and security reign throughout the national

territory. The Republic's institutions are all in place and operating normally.

As peace and security in my country have been recovered, the United Nations presence merits reconsideration. Indeed, the role of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) must necessarily adapt its vision and its action on the ground. In that phase of consolidation, MONUSCO must increasingly move beyond the strict format of peacekeeping operations in order to assist the country in its efforts to develop and to relaunch the economy.

Enormous progress has certainly been made in the areas of peace and security. However, many other challenges remain, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo is determined to meet them. The mobilization and support of all should be along those lines. I refer in particular to the following areas of concerns: strengthening the capacity of the security sector, the army, the police, the judiciary and penitentiary systems to ensure the rights and security of citizens and to stabilize the country and the region; the increasing and orderly return of displaced persons to their places of origin and of refugees to their respective countries; the ongoing demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers leaving armed groups; effective control over the exploitation of our natural resources; and building good-neighbourly relations with the States around us.

In that regard, after several years of conflict the countries in the region have reached the conclusion that war is the worst enemy of man and his development. It exacerbates problems rather than resolves them. That explains their common will and our efforts to seek peace at all costs. That is the reality today. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is at peace with all its neighbours. Now is the time for reconstruction and development.

In that regard, I would like to welcome the recent entry of the Republic of South Sudan as a Member State of our universal Organization and to convey to its people my most heartfelt wishes for peace, happiness and prosperity.

Another challenge that my country must face is that of maintaining economic growth. Despite a difficult international climate, today the Democratic Republic of the Congo shows a positive growth rate above the African average, and it will continue that momentum thanks to the efforts to harness its economy. However, it is also true that such growth remains dependent, to a large degree, on the global economy.

Having spoken about the situation in my country, I would now like to address some big issues of current concern.

The United Nations has responded to a good number of challenges that justified its establishment at the end of the Second World War. In 66 years, the world has changed greatly, and the pace of change increases every day.

A great institution such as ours cannot remain static while its setting constantly changes. The time has come to envisage adapting the Organization to current realities so as to improve its effectiveness and, above all, to bolster confidence among Member States. To do that, it must make substantial progress in the major areas of a reform too long awaited, whether the revitalization of the General Assembly, reform of the Security Council or the role of the Economic and Social Council, which needs to be strengthened. A Security Council that incorporates equally the legitimate aspirations of developing countries, particularly those of Africa, would certainly be more legitimate.

Furthermore, the issues of climate change and the protection of nature demand a changed approach that takes into account the aspirations of all peoples. That is an area where it is prudent to demonstrate a spirit of compromise and solidarity in the interest, of course, of all countries.

That is also the case for the crucial goals of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which remain hostage to the policy of double standards, such as discriminatory practices and non-compliance with commitments made, in particular by certain nuclear Powers.

The fight against impunity and against human rights violations, which is subjected to a selective approach and the partisan implementation of international humanitarian law, gives rise to legitimate doubts about the exploitation of these noble causes for political ends. Our Organization must address these issues.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo believes that the Israeli-Palestinian question should be a major concern for our universal Organization. The United

Nations should unflaggingly continue its efforts to find an equitable solution that bears in mind the legitimate interests of two peoples, each with the right to live in peace and security. The Middle East cannot recover peace and stability without a fair and lasting settlement of this question.

I would not continue my remarks without mentioning the more active cooperation that we would like to see between the African Union and the United Nations in the area of conflict management. It is advisable, in my humble opinion, that we strengthen this cooperation and make better use of it in order to reduce the number of hot spots on our continent. We all stand to gain.

Mr. Archondo (Plurinational State of Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I have focused my remarks today on the need to strengthen peace. That is the essential precondition for all progress, but a peace limited to an absence of stomping boots is not peace. Without ignoring the successes, it must be said that in this area our Organization still has an enormous amount to do to ensure that each and every person is able to participate in the progress of all of humanity.

I conclude by renewing our wishes to see the concept and management of international affairs modified through an effective and sincere commitment of the entire community of nations for a renewal and strengthening of the multilateral system.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Johnson Toribiong, President of the Republic of Palau

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Palau.

Mr. Johnson Toribiong, President of the Republic of Palau, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Johnson Toribiong, President of the Republic of Palau, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Toribiong: It is an honour and a privilege to address the General Assembly once again on behalf of the people of Palau.

For thousands of years, Palau was blessed by a natural bounty that sustained our livelihood and bound us together as a people. We lived in remoteness and isolation by respecting the environment and managing our natural resources for the benefit of every generation.

Today, however, we find ourselves to be innocent victims of transboundary harm. Forces beyond Palau's control, and not of our own making, are ravaging the oceans, damaging the land and reefs, threatening our way of life and, in the worst-case scenario, our very existence. Although we do our best to act responsibly and sustainably, there is only so much my country can do on its own to protect itself. We therefore rely on our partners, the international system and on the international rule of law to provide a remedy.

I would like to speak today about three pernicious types of transboundary harm.

First, I point to the state of global fisheries. Palau's fish are among the most valuable in the world, but they are in danger. Distant water boats do not respect our borders, laws or traditions. These boats come in great numbers for tuna in the Western and Central Pacific region, where Palau is located. At present, our region's tuna is being taken for pennies on the dollar. These boats also hunt, fin and sell sharks for a tiny fraction of what tourists will pay to see those sharks alive in our waters.

Like the ocean's currents, efforts to protect the marine environment must flow across boundary lines. It takes international cooperation to protect our marine resources and environment.

Palau and other Pacific small island developing States have undertaken innovative measures to ensure the continued viability of our stocks. We have limited purse seine fishing, agreed to close the "donut holes" between our jurisdictions and implemented a Vessel Day Scheme.

Two years ago, from this very rostrum, I announced the creation of the world's first shark sanctuary. Since that time, countries and territories across the globe have joined Palau in this effort. Today, more than 2.7 million square kilometres of ocean are safe for sharks. Our ocean's health depends on sharks, so I am delighted that earlier today several representatives of States in different parts of the world joined me to declare our shared commitment to conserving the ocean's vast biodiversity and nurturing and protecting shark sanctuaries. But that is just the first step.

Global fisheries should be sustainable. Reckless practices that harm our fisheries and threaten our food security should stop. That means that shark finning should stop. Bottom trawling, which destroys the base of the marine food web, should also stop.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reports that 85 per cent of global fish stocks are now fully or overexploited. These are the worst numbers on record. The international community must find a way to make regional fisheries management organizations more accountable, so that the world can see whether countries are living up to their commitments. And global fisheries should be fair. If distant water vessels want to come to fish for our resources, they must respect our laws and those of our region. They should fish within our prescribed limits and share the mutual benefits with us in a fair and equitable manner.

Fishing is not a right. It is a privilege. For too long, the exploitation of tuna has overridden efforts to conserve it. This imbalance is not sustainable and must be reversed. This should be done by creating a tuna conservation zone to make the conservation of this valuable resource paramount and to maximize the benefits to the nations in our region where tuna is harvested. We who live in the Pacific see the ocean as our farm, the source of our sustenance and livelihood. At the biggest-ever Pacific Tuna Conference, to be held in Palau in early December, that concept of a tuna conservation zone will be considered and applied to our region of the world. We should continue our efforts to maximize the benefits to our islands of sustainable tuna fishing in our waters.

Secondly, we fear that this year undetectable amounts of nuclear radiation may have entered our territory. This is a particularly insidious form of transboundary harm. I was involved in writing Palau's Constitution, which bans the presence of any nuclear material in our territory. We are proud to have been the first in the world to institute such a prohibition. But the supreme law of our land cannot protect us from potential radiation coming from outside our borders. We fear the possibility that someday our fish may not be safe to eat and our water may not be safe to drink. And so we ask the world to redouble its efforts to eliminate the threat of nuclear radiation.

Thirdly, as I speak, people are suffering from the effects of climate change. As our corals die, shores erode and waters rise, people feel helpless and hopeless. Traditionally, we would appeal for divine intervention. But this is not a problem from above; it is manmade. It poses an existential threat that exemplifies the issue of transboundary harm. Today, I regret to say that we are nowhere close to a solution. Next year will mark the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. But have we made progress? While sea levels have risen, emissions continue unabated. We are still without a binding agreement.

This past July, the Pacific small island developing States banded together to put before the Security Council modest, achievable and prudent proposals for addressing the security threats of climate change. But our voices were drowned out by other States' priorities. I can only agree with the views expressed in the Council by the United States: the failure of some States to acknowledge the clear-cut security implications of climate change is pathetic.

However, we will not be deterred. Leaders of the Pacific States have declared that the urgent social, economic and security threats posed by climate change require action in every international forum. The General Assembly, in its consensus resolution 63/281, invited the relevant bodies of the United Nations to intensify their efforts in considering and addressing climate change, including its possible security implications.

With this in mind, Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Islands will call on the Assembly to seek, on an urgent basis and pursuant to Article 96 of the Charter of the United Nations, an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the responsibilities of States under international law to ensure that activities emitting greenhouse gases that

are carried out under their jurisdiction or control do not damage other States.

The case should be clear. The International Court of Justice has already confirmed that customary international law obliges States to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or under their control respect the environment of other States. Similarly, Article 194, paragraph 2, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides that States shall take all measures necessary to ensure that activities under their jurisdiction or control do not spread or cause damage by pollution to other States. It is time we determined what the international rule of law means in the context of climate change. The International Court of Justice is mandated to do just that.

At the opening of last year's General Assembly, His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated that "At the United Nations, we find the proper path in community, global cause ... and mutual responsibility for a destiny we share" (*A/65/PV.11, p. 1*). That sentiment means, first and foremost, that countries must do no harm, particularly to the most fragile among us. We should find guidance in the international rule of law. Nations must respect fellow nations. Whether the issue is destructive fishing practices, nuclear radiation or excessive emissions, nations must work together and cease to cause transboundary harm.

I would like to share with the Assembly a number of important initiatives that Palau is undertaking to connect with the international community, literally and in spirit.

Palau is currently connected to the Internet by satellite. However, the service is poor and the cost unaffordable for most of our people. Last year's report of the International Telecommunication Union's Broadband Commission confirms that broadband access is a prerequisite to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. According to the report, a 10 per cent increase in broadband penetration in developing countries increases GDP by 1.4 per cent. Imagine what a 100 per cent increase could do.

In light of that report, I have signed Executive Order No. 297 establishing a presidential task force to acquire a submarine fibre optic cable so that Palau will be better equipped to meet its Millennium Development Goals. I hope that others will cooperate to help Palau connect to the world, and that leaders will answer the Commission's clarion call to ensure that all people have access to broadband networks by 2015.

Palau is also reaching out to the world on human rights. In February, we began our Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review. As a former practicing attorney and human rights advocate, I have been an ardent supporter of this process from the outset, and so I have committed Palau's limited resources to ensuring a complete and meaningful outcome. As evidence of that commitment, I established a task force chaired by our Minister of State and comprised of officials from across a broad spectrum of our Government. Stakeholders from non-governmental organizations and civil society were also invited to become involved in the operations of the task force and contributed significantly to Palau's national report.

By all accounts, Palau's response was a great success. The Human Rights Council unanimously adopted our report. The most repeated recommendation from Human Rights Council members was that Palau should establish a National Human Rights Institution. I have taken this recommendation to heart and am pleased to announce that Palau will establish a National Human Rights Institution. I am also pleased to announce that, as of this week, Palau is now a signatory to all core international human rights conventions. I hope others will assist Palau as we build our institution and work to fulfil our obligations under those conventions.

Once again, I wish to bring to the world's attention the fact that the fierce battles fought by foreign armies over Palau's islands during the Second World War left explosives scattered across our land and in our waters. Some of those explosives, which number in the thousands, are still live. I appeal to the conscience of the world and, especially, of those responsible, to help us remove this danger from our midst.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for attending the recent meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum, held earlier this month in Auckland, New Zealand. That meeting was the Forum's fortieth anniversary and was the first time that a United Nations Secretary-General has attended our regional meeting and the first time that a United Nations Secretary-General has visited a Pacific small island developing State. I would like to thank His Excellency

Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his visit. It is a testament to the fact that the countries of our region, even the smallest and most vulnerable among us, have something important to say and to contribute to our world.

I would also like to express Palau's gratitude for the strong support and friendship of all of our partners, new and old. In particular, I would like to thank the United States of America, Japan and the Taiwan province of China.

In order to further promote the efficacy, goals and ideals of the United Nations, we recommend that Taiwan be invited to participate meaningfully in the United Nations system. I believe that the United Nations cannot fully and properly address the issues of health, aviation safety and climate change unless Taiwan is allowed to participate in the activities of the World Health Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Once again, I appeal to the world to allow Taiwan to participate in these important United Nations entities.

Finally, Palau is a relatively new State, having joined the world community in 1994. Thus, we remember well the jubilation of our new-found freedom and independence. I take this opportunity to congratulate the people of South Sudan on attaining their independence and taking their rightful place here, in United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Palau for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Johnson Toribiong, President of the Republic of Palau, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Idriss Déby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Idriss Déby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad.

Mr. Idriss Déby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Idriss Déby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Déby Itno (*spoke in French*): The Chadian delegation warmly congratulates the President on his election to the presidency of the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session and assures him of its cooperation and support as he carries out his noble endeavours.

I also express my delegation's admiration for his predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss, who skilfully guided the Assembly's work during the sixty-fifth session.

Finally, Chad pays tribute the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his work on the development front and towards peace in the world. We reiterate to him our warmest congratulations on his well-deserved re-election to a second term at the helm of our Organization.

My delegation welcomes the choice of the central theme for our general debate, "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes". This theme is fully consistent with our own political vision, our convictions and our philosophy of a harmonious and egalitarian world.

Chad has made its own modest contribution in supporting the efforts of the State of Qatar, the United Nations and the international community by participating at the highest level in the negotiations and conclusion of the Doha Framework Agreement for the Resolution of the Conflict in Darfur between the Sudanese Government and the armed opposition in Darfur. We sincerely hope that this crisis will finally be resolved. To that end, the Sudan should be supported by the entire international community, so that peace and security can be restored throughout the country and in the subregion.

Furthermore, we are concerned by the hotbeds of tension that are spreading throughout the world and that sometimes stem from the profound changes taking place, particularly in some countries of the Middle East and in the Maghreb. That process is often described as the Arab Spring.

Our Organization must be resolute in its commitment to stand with the parties to conflict, as part of efforts to find solutions based on reconciliation and forgiveness. In addition to the losses of human life

that we have witnessed, we should also mention the fact that dramatic circumstances such as these also result in the inevitable streams of refugees and the displaced. And when we speak of refugees and displaced persons, we are talking about misery and terrible suffering. We are well qualified to discuss this issue, given that Chad is now hosting more than 100,000 refugees from Central Africa in the south-western part of the country and more than 290,000 Sudanese refugees and 180,000 Chadian displaced persons in the east. They have been living in this situation since 2003, in precarious environmental and social conditions.

We call on the international community to show solidarity and to assist us in assuming responsibility for all Chadian displaced persons. In the wake of the full withdrawal last March of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), the Chadian Government assumed responsibility for the protection of refugees and displaced persons, as well as of the humanitarian organizations that are assisting them, by setting up a special national force known as the Détachement intégré de sécurité. It is to be hoped that our partners will continue to deploy efforts alongside us and complement them with the financial and logistical support necessary to the proper functioning of that force.

In addition, like a number of other Sahel countries, Chad has witnessed the return from Libya, in very dangerous conditions, of almost 100,000 of its nationals who were forced to leave Libya in a state of utter destitution. I should like to take this opportunity to thank the International Organization for Migration and other institutions as well as all those countries that have assisted us in repatriating and providing assistance to our nationals. Our deepest desire is for peace to return to Libya so that the killing can end and the Libyans can reconcile in the framework of the National Transitional Council in order to build a State based on the rule of law and democracy.

In connection with the building of a new Libya, we would draw the attention of our Libyan brothers to the situation of those of our citizens who, despite having contributed to the development of that country as immigrant workers, are sometimes referred to indiscriminately as mercenaries. In addition, we wish to express our great concern about the fate of the 400,000 Chadians who remain trapped in Libya. We call on the new Libyan authorities urgently to take measures aimed at fulfilling its commitment to protect immigrants.

Chad would also like to share with the Assembly our views on current issues of common concern, a number of which are being discussed in meetings during this session. These are mainly problems that affect international solidarity. They include the handling of economic and environmental crises as well as the security situation in our region. These issues directly affect our daily lives in that they hinder or even stall our development efforts, particularly in the case of countries emerging from conflict, such as Chad. The aftermath of those crises will certainly jeopardize the implementation of our development strategies and our capacity to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Chad, which has lived through decades of external attacks, cannot achieve the Millennium Development Goals unless it receives substantial support through, inter alia, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative. For that reason, we have repeatedly called for support from the relevant international institutions.

One of the consequences of climate change is that this year the Sahel area saw low levels of rainfall, which could lead to an environmental and humanitarian catastrophe such as the one that we have seen in recent months in the Horn of Africa.

We commend all of the initiatives undertaken by the Organization to promote international solidarity with our countries through high-level meetings and summits, including the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Istanbul, and upcoming conferences on combating desertification and on sustainable development, to be held in Korea and in Rio de Janeiro, respectively.

Among the other major initiatives that we have undertaken, I would like to stress in particular those relating to free emergency health care, maternal and child health, communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria, and free education at all levels. Our policies on gender and on the empowerment of youth remain the cornerstone of our vision of a new Chad that is moving ahead and making progress.

Finally, of all the challenges facing us, the issue of sustainable development remains a priority. Indeed,

following the holding in Chad in June 2010 of a meeting on the Great Green Wall initiative by the countries of the Sahel, our country in October 2010 convened the eighth World Forum on Sustainable Development on the theme "Save Lake Chad". The action plans that emerged from those meetings are being publicized so as to ensure support for their implementation. We call once again on the international community to assist those countries located on the banks of Lake Chad to help save the lake, because the world should know that the future of the Congo Basin forest depends on its survival, as does the combat against desertification.

The question of Palestine has been outstanding for far too long, and its impact on regional and global security influence is felt daily. There is therefore an urgent need for an international consensus on the issue of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. We believe that the time has come to recognize a State of Palestine living side by side with the State of Israel. We must have the courage to move forward in this direction, which is essential in order to bring about peace between the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples. For that reason, I call on all peace- and justice-loving countries to commit themselves to that end.

Finally, we would like once again to touch on the issue of the reform of the United Nations, one of whose characteristics is the marginalization of a large part of humankind; I refer here to the African people. African States, individually and collectively, are today key players in terms of peace, security and development. Unfortunately, it has to be said that they have not yet assumed their full role within the system, because of, inter alia, their marginalization in the context of initiatives aimed at resolving certain conflicts that pose a threat to peace and security on our continent.

United Nations reform is absolutely necessary, and we should accelerate the process, in consideration of the claims and legitimate hopes of Africans, whose main concern is to fulfil the right of the African continent to be represented on the Security Council by a permanent seat with veto power. That is the only way for Africa to effectively contribute to conflict prevention and settlement and to the maintenance of peace in the world at large and on the African continent in particular.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Chad for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Idriss Déby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ivo Josipović, President of the Republic of Croatia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Croatia.

Mr. Ivo Josipović, President of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ivo Josipović, President of the Republic of Croatia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Josipović: It is a distinct pleasure for me to participate in the general debate of the General Assembly for the first time since my election as President of Croatia.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Al-Nasser on his election as President of the General Assembly in its sixty-sixth session. I also thank Joseph Deiss for his excellent work during his presidency of the General Assembly in the preceding session.

Let me also congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his re-election to that important and challenging post and assure him of the full cooperation of my country.

Current challenges — the fall of autocratic regimes, nuclear non-proliferation, terrorism, the continuing global financial and economic crisis, climate change, underdevelopment — require all of us here at the United Nations to firmly stand together and offer common solutions on the basis of solidarity, responsibility and respect for the rights and dignity of every person on the globe. Our responses to challenges must not remain just words. We need to translate them into concrete actions, aimed at advancing democracy, enhancing development and well-being, protecting human rights, respecting international law ensuring

social justice and promoting the rule of law, at the domestic, regional and international levels.

I welcome the President's decision to hold this debate under the theme of "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes". Mediation has rightly been recognized as an efficient and cost-effective tool, which the United Nations has at its disposal in addressing threats to the maintenance of international peace and security. Political issues often lie at the heart of crises. Therefore, the importance of early engagement and preventive diplomacy, including mediation, is even more significant in this period when United Nations peacekeeping operations are experiencing unprecedented demand and strain.

My country has come a long way since the conflict in the 1990s, when Croatia hosted a total of five United Nations peacekeeping operations on its territory. We have developed a stable democracy and a free-market economy, and we serve as an anchor of peace, security and stability in the region of South-East Europe.

That experience and the lessons learned have been the backdrop for our engagement in the Security Council, where Croatia has proved to be a responsible and dedicated partner in the common effort to maintain and build peace. We intend to pursue efforts with the same vigour in the Peacebuilding Commission, the Economic and Social Council and other United Nations bodies for which Croatia is a candidate.

When all efforts to avoid conflict fail, the international community turns as a rule to the United Nations to stop the hostilities and maintain peace. Croatia will continue its engagement in peacekeeping operations under United Nations auspices. But keeping the peace is not enough. In countries emerging from conflict, peace needs to be strengthened and consolidated.

Croatia has, in a relatively short time, effectively transitioned from a donor-recipient to a donor-provider. Today we share our knowledge and experiences with countries in the region, as well as with other countries in crisis, where our post-conflict experience in nation-building is particularly relevant. My country, working together with other Member States and the United Nations as a whole — and acting with the same enthusiasm and spirit that clearly characterized the international community's ambitions almost six years ago when the Peacebuilding Commission was established — stands ready to play its part in the revival of the peacebuilding architecture and thorough implementation of its core functions.

Croatia has completed its accession negotiations with the European Union (EU) and expects to become a full member in 2013. Once it joins the EU, Croatia will consistently advocate further EU enlargement and will not use its outstanding bilateral issues to set conditions for the progress of individual countries in the process of their integration with the EU.

I have held numerous meetings with my counterparts in the region, in particular the Presidents of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. In our meetings, we have discussed the continuation of the reconciliation process, the resolution of outstanding issues among the three States and our mutual political support. Croatia has pledged technical assistance in the process of integration into the European Union and has stressed the need to jointly define regional networks of infrastructure systems and submit them as regional projects for funding from EU funds.

As a member of NATO and a future member of the EU, we have a keen interest to see South-East Europe become a region of security, stability and development. That may not happen overnight, but I firmly believe that with sustained effort and targeted actions by all politicians and peoples, the region will lose its negative reputation as an arena of political fragmentation often accompanied by bloodshed, and will deservedly become known as an area where good-neighbourly relations, tolerance and mutual cooperation prevail, thus making it a European success story of peacebuilding and reconciliation.

However, without justice, efforts to ensure true reconciliation and sustainable peace may be unable to take root firmly. Croatia strongly supports determined efforts to put an end to impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to humanity and, in that context, reaffirms its commitment to international criminal justice in general and to the activities of the International Criminal Court in particular.

Croatia supports the main purpose and primary functions of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), namely, the establishment of a lasting peace and reconciliation. Croatia appreciates the efforts to implement the ICTY completion strategy and its transformation towards residual mechanisms. Full cooperation with the ICTY

and respect for international justice are a lasting commitment for us, not only in the context of the Euro-Atlantic integration processes, but also as an expression of Croatia's core values and its role in the international community. We greatly appreciate the legacy of the ICTY, especially its contribution to international law, justice and reconciliation. That legacy has already improved national judiciaries in the region through its promotion of high standards of criminal responsibility for breaches of humanitarian law. Further development of international law, both international and national judiciaries and a better understanding of justice will be based on this positive legacy, but also on the lessons learned from some of the ICTY's weaknesses.

Future development of international criminal law should consider improving the efficiency of international courts and of State cooperation, as well as instituting a critical evaluation of some procedural and substantive laws. In that regard, we should consider more efficient measures to be taken in cases of non-cooperative States, the position of victims and their compensation, and the protection of witnesses, as well as the concept of joint criminal enterprise, and others.

The protection of fundamental rights and freedoms must be ensured when addressing very serious security challenges, such as international terrorism. Croatia strongly supports the values and objectives of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, since it confirms that the United Nations is at the centre of global counter-terrorism efforts. We had the privilege of chairing the Counter-Terrorism Committee during Croatia's membership in the Security Council, and we are willing to share our knowledge and experience with others, in the region and beyond.

The Arab Spring, which is rooted in the legitimate aspirations of ordinary people for improved economic opportunities and political participation, has just moved into summer, but its democratic gains must be preserved if we do not want to see another relapse into instability. I believe that the course of recent events in Libya has clearly confirmed that the coalition forces and the Security Council took the right approach in protecting civilians from the brute force of the old regime. I hope that the democratic forces in Libya will begin to build a new State that will provide the same level of protection and equal opportunities for all Libya's citizens. It is crucial to work towards establishing the rule of law throughout the country. We trust that the National Transitional Council will succeed in achieving that goal. My country is ready to participate in Libya's reconstruction, especially given its experience in post-conflict nation- and institution-building. Taking into account new political and humanitarian priorities in the field, Croatia has sent targeted humanitarian assistance to Libya, with an emphasis on medical and humanitarian needs.

In the same vein, Croatia has recognized the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, who need and deserve wide and undivided support. We share the international community's belief that it is essential to normalize the situation and prevent further mass violations of human rights, strengthen democratic standards and the rule of law, and assist those who share the vision of a democratic Syria.

Croatia shares the sense of urgency concerning the importance of securing an early resumption and conclusion of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, aimed at achieving a two-State solution. The current unprecedented and deep changes in the political landscape of the Middle East call for urgent and highly responsive action by all parties concerned. Mutual recognition — Israel's recognition of a Palestinian State and Palestine's recognition of the Jewish State — constitutes both the starting point and the desired outcome of peace negotiations. Failure to move forward on a two-State solution now may have unpredictable negative consequences, not only for Israel and Palestine, but for the whole international community. Given our recent experience of war and reconciliation, Croatia calls on the leaders of the parties concerned to shoulder their historic responsibility for the future of their peoples and for peace and stability in the Middle East.

Recently, we witnessed an example of a new State being created in a generally peaceful manner, and I welcome South Sudan as the newest Member of the United Nations. However, this and many other ongoing crises, in the Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other places, confirm the irreplaceable role of the United Nations in ending conflicts; and in this context mediation, as the theme of our debate, becomes even more relevant.

Croatia continues to promote universal human rights and supports the mainstreaming of human rights

within the United Nations framework. In that context, we give particular attention to issues such as the abolition of the death penalty, gender equality and combating all forms of discrimination, as well as the promotion of the human rights of the most vulnerable social groups, including women, children and persons with disabilities. Croatia strongly supports the concepts of the universality, interrelatedness and indivisibility of all human rights.

Croatia welcomes the establishment of UN-Women, the new United Nations body focused on supporting gender equality and the empowerment of women. Croatia also supports relevant initiatives on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons and will continue to be actively engaged in the follow-up process to the 2008 joint statement on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity (see A/63/PV.70).

In response to dramatic changes in the world in the last few decades, comprehensive reforms of the United Nations system as a whole have been put forward. Those proposals include structural reform and improvements in the way United Nations bodies function, as well as revitalization of the General Assembly. Although there are many important elements in this process, reforming the Security Council remains essential. Croatia believes that the Security Council must adequately represent the current structure of the membership of the United Nations. We therefore support enlarging the Security Council in both permanent and non-permanent membership categories. Taking into consideration that the number of members of the Eastern European Group has almost doubled, Croatia proposes that one seat be added for the Group in the non-permanent category. Croatia is also aware of the importance of resolving all the other elements of Security Council reform.

As we witness the increasing challenges appearing around the world, it is clear that we must all make every effort to strengthen the capability, efficiency and credibility of the United Nations in general. We welcome the establishment of the Change Management Team, and look forward to seeing proposals for streamlining processes, increasing accountability and improving the efficiency of the United Nations in delivering its mandates.

The challenges and consequences of climate change are undermining efforts to achieve sustainable development. Climate change must be further mainstreamed into the work of the whole United Nations system, with a view to supporting efforts to help the transition to low-carbon economies consistent with sustainable development, to strengthen countries' adaptation and resilience in the face of climate change, and to minimize the possible security implications.

In the light of diminishing natural resources, environmental degradation, extreme poverty, hunger and diseases, and social unrest, we agree with others that sustainable development has become the defining issue of our time. Our highly globalized and interdependent world means that we share not only the same challenges but a common fate. As a member of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, Croatia will be an active contributor to the preparations for next year's United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the Rio+20 Conference. This summit meeting will provide a unique opportunity to reinvigorate the spirit of Rio and to restate a blueprint for political commitment, partnership and action on the ground without revisiting the agreements reached at Rio in 1992 or at Johannesburg in 2002.

Finally, let me return to what this Organization stands for. In order to achieve our common objectives, we must demonstrate unity of purpose, firm resolve, solidarity and responsibility. Or, as a famous composer once said, "Only the pure in heart can make a good soup."

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of the Republic of Croatia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ivo Josipović, President of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Ms. Laura Chinchilla Miranda, President of the Republic of Costa Rica

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Costa Rica.

Ms. Laura Chinchilla Miranda, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to

welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Laura Chinchilla Miranda, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Chinchilla Miranda (*spoke in Spanish*): It gives me great pleasure to begin my statement by warmly congratulating Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his re-election to the post in which he has carried out his duties with such effectiveness and honesty. His contributions to the Organization, the international community and the multilateral system over these first five years are well known. We know they will continue to be so in the years to come.

I would also like to congratulate the President of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser. His experience, ability and dedication are guarantees of fruitful work.

I extend my best wishes to both as they exercise their vital functions, and they will have Costa Rica's full support for their efforts in favour of peace, security, democracy, disarmament, human rights, respect for the rule of law, sustainable development, mediation and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

I am also very pleased to welcome South Sudan as a new Member of the Organization. I believe that its people will enjoy a prosperous, peaceful and safe future. The emergence of this new State is a testament to what can be achieved, even in situations of endemic violence, through serious negotiations between the parties and international mediation.

The intense and invigorating, but still uncertain, currents of political and social change that have swept through North Africa and the Middle East this year are proof of the universal force of democracy as an aspiration, of free expression as an incentive, and of respect for human dignity as the most urgent demand.

Our admiration for the peoples of those countries is as great as our hope in their capacity to forge social and political systems in peace, systems that are tolerant, free and dynamic, in which people are respected and whereby a country can be open to its neighbours.

We also hope that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will soon come to an end, with two sovereign and democratic States living in peaceful coexistence.

From its deepest collective roots, Costa Rica fully identifies with the principles of democracy, peace and human rights. These are values that we share with the immense majority of Central Americans.

Disrespect for those values, together with social exclusion, the outrages of militarism and the deadly echo of the Cold War, plunged much of Central America into a series of intense conflicts for almost four decades. After tens of thousands of deaths, our region was able, through dialogue and mediation, to overcome the worst manifestations of political violence. In those overwhelming days, Costa Rica made a decisive contribution by shaping and realizing the Esquipulas Accords, which opened the door to reconciliation.

Since then, progress has been slow and erratic. Fifteen years ago, as part of that process, Central American countries signed the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America. But the time that has elapsed since then has not sufficed to secure the peace, liberty, democracy and development in the region that we promised our peoples.

Even worse, we are now victims of a new and terrible form of aggression. I am referring to the cold, disastrous and fierce onslaught of transnational organized crime. Such activities have generated insecurity, weakened institutions, corrupted officials, fostered addiction, cut short the lives of thousands of young people, destroyed families and turned humble single mothers into criminals. This scourge has eroded the basic fabric of our society and has jeopardized the very existence of the rule of law in some countries.

Today, I wish to repeat the comments I made on 22 June at the International Conference on Regional Security in Central America, held recently in Guatemala. Our region has fallen victim to a perverse geopolitical situation. As Costa Rica is located between the major production centres and the world's largest consumer market for drugs, we have become a target in the dynamic of death that both create. We must bear the burden of exponentially increasing material, institutional and human costs. What are instances of mere collateral damage for some of the main actors in this conflict are, for the people of Central America, extreme challenges and a source of deep wounds.

That is where our greatest frustration lies. That is why we demand that the international community, in particular the largest consumers of drugs and producers

of the weapons that create violence, fully assume its share of responsibility without further delay.

The International Conference on Regional Security in Central America, which was attended by the Presidents of all of the countries in the region, from Mexico to Colombia, was a hopeful turning point. There, we were able to coordinate our strategies. There, we agreed on the need for a comprehensive approach to violence that includes measures to strengthen institutions and the rule of law, as well as comprehensive initiatives to prevent and fight crime. In addition, we were able to catch the attention of, and obtain some promises from, the international community.

Nonetheless, it remains to be seen whether the strategies can be translated into effective actions, or whether we will have enough support from external resources to drive them forward. Those resources are not merely aid. They are a morally inescapable and, in practical terms, indispensable form of compensation that we need to make at least part of the investment necessary to establish peace, stability and security.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations has insisted, quite rightly, on the need to promote preventive diplomacy. I join in that call as President of Costa Rica and as a citizen of Central America. I insist, before the world, that we can wait no longer to act in order to avoid an even greater tragedy in our region. It is already late; to wait even longer will be tragic.

Preventive diplomacy demands political will. We are approaching another moment in which it will be put to the test. I refer to the upcoming United Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, which Costa Rica has actively supported, along with other States. We need to have the Conference produce a robust, comprehensive and demanding instrument capable of effectively controlling the flow of the death machines that provoke all types of conflict.

Preventive diplomacy, in its deepest essence, also means fostering democracy and human rights and respecting the rule of law as the cornerstone of security and international coexistence. Costa Rica knows it well. Since we abolished the army in 1949, our only lines of defence have been the deep civic beliefs of our people, the strength of our institutions and the instruments provided by the multilateral system. The security of the 26 other disarmed democracies in the world also depends on those defences. We deserve to be heard and paid attention to.

A little less than a year ago, our faith in international law and the instruments and institutions that underpin it was put to the test. Last October, Nicaraguan troops and civilians invaded and occupied part of our national territory, in clear violation of our sovereignty, the border treaties and international law. After exhausting the possibilities of a suitable bilateral agreement, we appealed to various forums of the regional and international system. Our neighbour's Government rejected several of them. Finally, thanks to urgent measures ordered by the International Court of Justice, the Nicaraguan forces had to leave our territory.

However, while we await the Court's final ruling, Nicaragua, ignoring the Court's orders, has continued specific provocations to and violations of the provisional measures. Furthermore, it has threatened other actions that could infringe on our territory. We hope that that does not occur. But, if it were to, we will vigorously reinstate our actions before the machinery of the international system.

All that we request of the Organization and the multilateral system in general is rapid and timely consideration of possible aggressions. The international community cannot make its preventive action conditional on actual armed violence between brothers. It should react not only in relation to the quantity and scale of the explosive blasts, but to the severity and persistence of the violations.

Otherwise, the message to the world would be disastrous. It would imply that the shortest route for mobilizing international diplomacy is that of blood. As a country and as a people, we emphatically reject that notion.

Based on our firm belief in the importance of the rule of law, human rights and humanitarian law, I informed the Assembly a year ago of our aspiration to become a member of the Human Rights Council. Today, I am grateful for the generous support that it gave us in achieving that goal. We will remain faithful to the promises made at the time and to the proposals that we called for during the review of the Council in Geneva and New York.

In particular, I urge Member States to support an initiative whose time has come: the United Nations

declaration on human rights education and training, which Costa Rica supports together with a group of like-minded countries. After its unanimous adoption by the Council, it will soon be submitted to the General Assembly. We are confident that it will receive similar support.

When education, deterrence and other preventive mechanisms are unable to avert the worst assaults on human dignity, the international community faces other obligations. Among them is the protection of civilians, contained in the responsibility to protect. My country recognizes that concept as a principle and guide for action, whether preventive or reactive, on the basis of legitimate and well-founded decisions. We hope that such a concept, like human security, is very clearly defined within the Organization.

Moreover, the fight for human rights requires that perpetrators of crimes against humanity be held accountable and punished. Today, the International Criminal Court is the main multilateral mechanism for achieving that goal. I reiterate our support of its activities and urge all States Members of the United Nations to ratify the Treaty of Rome. I also urge that we should all, as Member States, be more active and resolute in our support for the greater effectiveness, relevance and significance of the United Nations; hence, the importance of its reform process.

Costa Rica has joined and will continue to join initiatives that push for the best possible changes. Among other things, we will continue to work constructively for the ongoing improvement of the working methods of the Security Council, through the Small Five group, and for a more representative composition of that organ, in accordance with the guidelines of Uniting for Consensus.

Costa Rica is a middle-income country. Thanks to its commitment to democracy, peace, good governance, the efficient use of international cooperation and its investments in health and education, Costa Rica has achieved high levels of human development. Together with other States with similar characteristics, we exemplify the success of international cooperation as a key factor in achieving such results. However, we still face serious challenges with regard to poverty, income distribution, regional differences and the consequences of the economic crisis and natural disasters, among others.

We have been responsible, effective and ethical partners. We have made progress in development, but have still not been able to consolidate it to the point of dispensing with international assistance. We still need that assistance to fully secure our achievements. We look forward to the support and understanding of donor countries and the institutions of the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Development Programme. Our relative success should not be penalized, but bolstered.

Costa Rica has focused on sustainable social and environmental development. We have taken significant steps to sustain our growth through clean energy and a low-carbon economic model. Our goal is to become one of the first carbon-neutral countries in the world, and we are working diligently to achieve it.

On that path, in which every local action has global links, we have confidence in the next Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Climate Change Conference, to be held in Durban at the end of the year, and in the coming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, planned for next year in Rio de Janeiro. However, we are also concerned about the lack of progress made in earlier negotiations.

I conclude these words by reiterating our deep commitment to the principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations. I am delighted that yesterday we celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the International Day of Peace, a Costa Rican initiative that was adopted by consensus by Member States. It gives me even greater pleasure that its theme this year is "Peace and democracy: Make your voice heard".

As national and international leaders, we should always heed the voices of our peoples. We should listen to them, respect them and incorporate them in our initiatives. That is part of our democratic responsibility, the basis of good governance, the seed of meaningful change and the foundation of legitimacy.

As President of Costa Rica, a discrete, noble, fraternal and free people, I promise not to relent in our efforts to achieve a better country and a better world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Costa Rica for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Laura Chinchilla Miranda, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 7.50 p.m.

United Nations A/66/PV.17

General Assembly
Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

17th plenary meeting
Thursday, 22 September 2011, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

The meeting was called to order at 7.55 p.m.

High-level Meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Agenda item 67 (*continued*)

Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

(b) Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly will now hear a presentation by His Excellency The Right Honourable Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland and co-Chair of round table 1, who will present summaries of the discussions in the two round tables.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): I am pleased to present to the General Assembly today the summary of the fruitful discussion that was held today during the two round tables on the theme of "Victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance: recognition, justice and development".

The first round table was co-chaired by me and by His Excellency Mr. Arvin Boolell, GOSK, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade of Mauritius. The second round table was co-chaired by His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Mouldi Kefi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, and His Excellency Mr. Ricardo Bucio, President of the National Council to Prevent Discrimination of Mexico.

The following experts made presentations during the round tables: Mr. Anwar Kemal, Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; Ms. Edna Maria Santos Roland, member of the group of independent eminent experts on the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action; His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Siad Douale, Chair of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action; and Ms. Verene Shepherd, member of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent.

The participation and engagement of representatives of civil society during the discussions was greatly appreciated. During the discussions, many speakers pointed out that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, together with the outcome document of the 2009 Durban Review Conference, provide a very comprehensive and solid framework for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Today there are still millions of victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance around the world. Victims do not have access, for example, to education, employment and housing. Migrants and refugees are mistreated just for being different. The Internet is used to disseminate racist ideas among youth, and such sites promoting

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racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance should be eliminated.

It was noted that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action provides useful guidance to Governments, non-governmental organizations and other institutions in their efforts to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. However, it is important to ensure its implementation.

The importance of the ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which was focused on the needs of vulnerable groups, such as indigenous peoples, immigrants, migrant workers, Afro-descendants, Roma and other minorities, was emphasized.

It was stated that in 2001, the international community focused, for the first time, on victims, including people of African descent, indigenous peoples, and people of Asian descent, Roma, migrants, refugees, displaced people, asylum-seekers, national and religious minorities, women, youth and children and victims of trafficking.

The 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance acknowledged that slavery and the slave trade were crimes against humanity, and also included a gender perspective.

Policies are being developed in many countries in the areas of education, health, labour, access to land and housing. Despite achievements, serious problems remain worldwide. The misuse of technologies to disseminate hate and racist ideas is one example. The need for data collection was highlighted and an appeal for the proclamation of a United Nations decade for People of African descent was made.

Many speakers reaffirmed the importance of the need for commitment and political will to realize human rights for all without discrimination. Speakers also welcomed the adoption by consensus of the political declaration — the outcome of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (resolution 66/3).

Speakers also stated that the theme of this event rightfully focused on victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the need for their recognition and access to justice. A speaker noted that achieving justice is often the first step towards achieving equality. Some speakers also stated that the global response to racism should not be clouded by politics and that it is an obligation and responsibility for the international community — including civil society — to collectively work together to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

They also referred to measures taken at the national level, including legislation, policies, specialized institutions and programmes to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The importance of human rights education, awareness-raising campaigns, continued dialogue on anti-discrimination issues, including interreligious dialogue, and cooperation with civil society was noted by a number of speakers.

The importance of the media to promote a culture of tolerance and respect for diversity was also noted. The fight against racism should not be used to curtail or limit other rights and should not be an excuse for repression. The need to share best practices and to provide targeted technical assistance, including with the support of the United Nations, in the area of combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance was emphasized by speakers.

The importance of fighting poverty, particularly as articulated in the Millennium Development Goals, was stated. The need to integrate the right to development in anti-discrimination efforts was also stated, as was the importance of a human rights-based approach for sustainable development.

Prominent in the discussion was the issue of discrimination against migrants. It was stated that migrants experienced racial abuse, xenophobia, discriminatory labour practices, harsh living conditions, and trafficking, for example. Concern was expressed in various statements about the situation of groups in vulnerable situations, such as women, children, refugees and indigenous peoples. Concern was also expressed with respect to discrimination based on sexual orientation.

The issue of discrimination against religious minorities and the need to foster harmony and peaceful

coexistence of different religions in societies were emphasized. The rise of right-wing or nationalist movements, xenophobic statements by politicians and other public figures and the dissemination of such sentiments were highlighted as another important area of concern. Several speakers referred to people under foreign occupation and the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. The importance of not singling out a specific region or country was also emphasized.

It was noted that progress had been made but that gaps persisted. It was emphasized that countering discrimination is a global issue that needs to be tackled by joint efforts. The importance of economic, social and cultural rights for the lives of victims was also noted.

It was also emphasized that in order to guarantee the right against discrimination within a society, the creation and strengthening of specialized national bodies, in accordance with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, is fundamental. This requires that specialized organizations have a broad legal mandate, funds and appropriate infrastructure that would allow them to effectively promote equal opportunities and treatment among persons of different societal groups. It was stressed that today's work should help us reflect on the necessity of establishing specialized national bodies in the fight against racial discrimination, xenophobia and all other forms of discrimination and intolerance.

The need to apologize and to provide reparations to victims of the trans-Atlantic slave trade was highlighted, as was the recommendation to establish a permanent forum for Africans and people of African descent. The proposal to erect a memorial for the victims of the trans-Atlantic slave trade was welcomed by several speakers.

A speaker encouraged Member States to provide innovative and effective reparations, including resources to support social programmes to assist people of African descent. Monitoring of acts of racist discrimination is important in order to prevent further abuses.

It was further emphasized that the theme of the event accurately reflected the essence of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. It was also noted that the Political Declaration adopted during this commemorative event will bolster the morale of the victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance around the world. Countering the mainstreaming of hate speech was defined as imperative in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

A number of speakers expressed appreciation for the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the leadership of the High Commissioner in the domain of anti-discrimination efforts. Many speakers noted that States should continue to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and called for both national and regional processes to be strengthened. They also called for reinvigorated political will.

The tenth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action represents for many an opportunity to scale up their efforts and to exchange ideas on how to prevent racism and discrimination and share good practices. Several speakers emphasized that the tenth anniversary coincided with the International Year for People of African Descent. In that respect, some suggested that a decade for people of African descent be proclaimed in 2012. Some called for establishing a permanent forum and others called for proclaiming an international day for people of African descent.

A number of speakers also expressed concern about the trend of incitement to hatred. A number of speakers emphasized that an effective system of protection requires improved coordination among human rights mechanisms. There is a also a need to enhance the performance of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action follow-up mechanisms and to ensure commensurate funding for their activities.

Several speakers underscored the primary responsibility of States for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. They also stated that institutional changes and affirmative action had been implemented to improve the lives of victims and groups in vulnerable situations. Still, a lot remains to be done. The importance of countering corruption and ensuring the rule of law was further emphasized.

Today's discussion was thoughtful, constructive and forward-looking. Hopefully this commemoration will not remain mere rhetoric and we will all move together towards practical actions. Indeed, as stated in the Political Declaration that we adopted by consensus this morning, we shall

> "Proclaim together our strong determination to make the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and the protection of the victims thereof, a high priority for our countries." (*resolution 66/3, para. 12*)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): As we draw to a close this High-level Meeting to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to everyone here for coming together to reaffirm our collective commitment to prevent, combat and eradicate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

I would also like to express once more my heartfelt gratitude to the co-facilitators, Ms. Isabelle Picco, Permanent Representative of Monaco, and Mr. Michel Tommo Monthe, Permanent Representative of Cameroon, for their exceptional leadership throughout the preparations for the High-level Meeting. Let me also take this opportunity to sincerely thank the co-Chairs and all of the participants in today's meeting. I commend the peace-loving Member States that supported this process and worked together to address this serious global challenge.

Today we have heard about the important work being done worldwide to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. We have also heard about efforts to make progress towards realizing the fundamental principles of equality and non-discrimination, in accordance with international human rights law and the relevant instruments.

Unfortunately, we have also heard that, despite concerted efforts, racist attitudes and racial discrimination continue to perpetrate deeply embedded social and economic disparities.

That rising inequality and discrimination make the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the commitments in the Political Declaration that we adopted this morning (resolution 66/3) even more urgent. It is vital that we go further to implement measures to counter intolerance and eradicate advocacy of hatred, incitement and discrimination. It is vital that we do our utmost to promote and strengthen effective dialogue, which in turn increases understanding within and among communities and promotes social cohesion. It is vital that we unite in our efforts and collaborate more intensively in order to effectively combat racism and other forms of discrimination.

I firmly believe that the principles of equality and non-discrimination are essential for social harmony, for the promotion of good governance and the rule of law, for sustainable development and for the fair allocation of resources. It is therefore crucial for the dignity and development of the world's population that we continue to fight the scourge of racism.

I urge everyone here to continue to speak with one voice, to unite in our efforts and to collaborate more intensively, in order to combat racism and to make the world a safer, more harmonious place for all.

(*spoke in English*)

The High-level Meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is now concluded.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 67.

The meeting rose at 8.20 p.m.

United Nations A/66/PV.18

General Assembly

Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

18th plenary meeting
Thursday, 22 September 2011, 7 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Archondo (Plurinational State of Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 8.20 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kevin Rudd, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia.

Mr. Rudd (Australia): Since we last gathered in this great Assembly one year ago, we have witnessed developments of historic dimensions. There has been democratic protest and democratic reform across the Arab world, as we discovered afresh that freedom is the right of all, not just of the few. Also, a global economic crisis is rolling on, as we enter a new and dangerous period that threatens the jobs and livelihoods of working people everywhere.

And while rarely making the front pages, the other great global challenges that have been with us now for too many years continue their almost alarmingly silent advance — challenges of grinding poverty, environmental degradation, the continued proliferation of nuclear weapons, the enhancement of human rights, all of which compete for attention on an already crowded international agenda.

Our global institutions are struggling to comprehend, let alone effectively respond to, this vast array of challenges that now confront us — challenges that arise as the inevitable consequence of what we now simply call globalization. Put simply, the dilemma is this: the challenges we face are increasingly global while the institutions at our disposal are still primarily national. Or put more crudely, for those engaged in democratic politics, the answers may lie abroad, but all the votes lie at home.

Three years ago, when I first spoke at this podium, I spoke of the storm clouds gathering across the global economy. It seemed as if we were in free fall as we all stared into the abyss, with the very real possibility of a second global depression in a century. Through coordinated intervention in 2009, we broke the fall. Yet three years on, the crisis in the global economy continues, still with a capacity to engulf us all. Recovery is stalling. Unemployment is rising. Confidence is waning. There are growing concerns over sovereign debt levels, and there are concerns also over the national and international political will to deal with these challenges.

This week, the International Monetary Fund issued a stark warning for the global economy, highlighting that we have entered a new and dangerous phase. So what then is to be done?

First, reforms to the financial system should be implemented and taxpayers should no longer be asked to bail out the irresponsible behaviour of particular financial institutions. Secondly, all major economies need to find a credible path back to surplus over time, consistent with the Group of Twenty's Framework for Strong, Sustainable and Balanced Growth. Thirdly, we

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must prevent a further outbreak of protectionism and we must conclude Doha, as history will condemn us if we repeat the job-destroying protectionism of the 1930s that transformed a financial crisis into a full-blown depression.

Fourthly, for international trade to grow and Chinese domestic demand to make a greater contribution to growth in economies around the world, we must also see currency reform, particularly with the appreciation of the Chinese yuan. And finally, we must with clarity of leadership and resolution of purpose define and deliver a range of other new innovative drivers of global growth. These include innovative public-private financing for the new infrastructure revolution needed for power, water, agriculture, transport and communications. The jobs potential for the green energy revolution must be fully harvested by carbon pricing, and women and youth must participate fully in the economies of the developed and the developing world.

These are not just useful social policies. These are not just useful environmental policies. They are now necessary economic policies to generate the next missing increment of global economic growth. What is required, therefore, is global and national political leadership capable of looking beyond the next electoral cycle — to look to the long term over the short term, to look to the strategic rather than the tactical, and to look to the necessary over the urgent.

Over the course of the last decade, we have seen an acceleration of the shift of economic power to Asia marking Asia's re-emergence as the centre of global economic gravity after an interruption of more than 200 years. In the year 2000, China was a mere 3.7 per cent of global GDP and India was less than half that. By 2030, they will account for more than 20 per cent of global GDP, and that will rise further. Asian countries held 16.6 per cent of global foreign exchange reserves in 2001. Now they hold 39 per cent.

Therefore, what happens in Asia is now of fundamental relevance to the world, not just to the region itself. Asian economic growth has been overwhelmingly good for the global economy.

But Asia has also seen an exponential increase in military expenditure. Over the last 20 years military expenditure in East Asia grew by nearly 150 per cent. During the same period the United States' military expenditure grew by 36 per cent. Asia, with its many unresolved territorial disputes and military tensions, has become the new global arms bazaar.

One of the big spenders, despite the poverty afflicting its population, is North Korea. North Korea's nuclear weapons programme and its long-range missile programme represent a direct threat to the security of our region, including Australia.

To deal adequately with those and other security challenges in Asia, we need strong regional institutional architecture, as a complement to the United Nations, to help build transparency, cooperation and, in time, a sense of common security in our region.

For that reason, Australia has promoted the concept of an Asia-Pacific community. Collectively, regional countries now have an opportunity to realize the idea of such a community through the expanded East Asia Summit (EAS), which for the first time this year will include the Presidents of the United States and of the Russian Federation. Over time, a stronger EAS can promote the type of rules-based order regionally for which the United Nations strives globally. This task is critical to avoid damaging strategic miscalculation in the Asia-Pacific region, which would also undermine global economic growth.

I say again: what happens in Asia now matters not just for Asia, itself, but for the world.

In Australia's more immediate region in the South Pacific, we are bound together by the common bonds of democracy and the responsibility we all have to develop those economies and protect their natural environment.

We thank the Secretary-General for his visit to the Pacific Islands Forum — the first ever by a United Nations Secretary-General. His commitment to our region is an important signal of the international community's interests in the Pacific's prosperity, its sustainability and its democracy.

Global events since the last session of the General Assembly have highlighted that the human cry for freedom and for democracy is both indivisible and universal. Australia stands with the rest of the international community in applauding the courage of those citizens seeking what is naturally theirs in Tunisia, in Egypt, in Libya, and now in Syria.

In Egypt, we are now supporting improved dry land farming and assistance with urban employment

programmes as Egypt moves to critical parliamentary and presidential elections. In Tunisia, we are providing agricultural and electoral assistance. In Libya, Australia was among the first to campaign internationally for a no-fly zone to protect civilians at a time when Al-Qadhafi seemed destined for victory. We are proud of the fact that since the Libya conflict began, Australia stands across the world as the third largest humanitarian donor to the long-suffering people of Libya. We also stand ready to assist with institution-building in the new Libya of the future.

What challenges us now is the ongoing brutality in Syria. The Syrian regime should heed the lessons of Libya. We call on Bashar Al-Assad to step down now, for political reform to begin now, and for the international community to intensify its pressure on Damascus to respond to the voices of the Syrian people demanding their legitimate freedom.

Twelve months ago, we had no expectation of change in Egypt, Tunisia or Libya. But we did hope to see progress in the historic process to bring permanent peace to the peoples of Israel and Palestine. Sadly, there has been no progress. Australia remains committed to a negotiated two-State solution that allows a secure and independent Israel to live side by side with a secure and independent Palestinian State.

Over the past 10 months I have travelled three times to both Jerusalem and Ramallah, where I have met on each occasion with Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas. I have urged both parties to engage in direct negotiations. I have argued that they should be held on the basis of the 1967 boundaries plus appropriate land swaps. I have argued that the remaining final status issues — the right to return, the status of Jerusalem, the Holy Sites and the provision of external security — be resolved through such direct negotiations.

My fear is that if we do not see these matters concluded in the near term, the rapidly changing geo-politics of the region will make the prospects of a lasting settlement remote. We have already seen tension between Israel and Egypt. We have already seen the fracturing of the relationship between Israel and Turkey. We do not know how long the current framework of the Arab Peace Plan will remain on the table. We are fearful of a further intifada of the type we have seen before.

As a friend of Israel, we are fearful that in the absence of a negotiated settlement, Israel's security situation will deteriorate rapidly in the year ahead. As a friend of the Palestinian people, we believe that the time has come for direct negotiations to establish a Palestinian State, one which also guarantees the security of Israel. If we fail to achieve this, I fear the gravity of the consequences as the ground continues to change across the wider Middle East. I note also that these views have been reflected today by the former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

Australia therefore urges both parties to seize the day and to shape the future of a new Middle East. We await the outcome from the weeks that lie ahead in New York, before framing our response to any particular resolution before the United Nations.

Terrorism is the enemy of all civilized peoples. A decade since 9/11, terrorism still casts a deep shadow over the security and safety of our citizens. Many of Australia's finest have lost their lives in the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan. Australia will stay the course in Afghanistan, because we refuse to yield to terrorism.

While terrorism threatens thousands, nuclear proliferation threatens millions. Australia remains vitally committed to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world and is active to that end. That is why we have established with Japan the Non-proliferation and Disarmament Initiative — the NPDI — to take forward the agenda of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

As we speak in this Assembly, we should remind ourselves that a fifth of humanity lives in grinding poverty. The scale of the challenge has been graphically demonstrated by this year's devastating drought in the Horn of Africa. I witnessed how bad things are when I visited the affected areas in July. Australia has given almost US$ 100 million. We are proud to be the fourth largest international donor to that crisis. We will continue to give.

Last year, we gathered to see how we were tracking on our collective pledge to lift a billion people out of poverty by 2015. The report card was very poor. Most of the Millennium Development Goals are unlikely to be achieved. Australia has doubled its official development assistance (ODA) budget over the past five years, and we are on track to double it again

by 2015. Based on available data, that would make Australia's ODA budget the sixth largest in the world.

The international community must get behind both regional and global efforts to meet the strategic need for food security. With a forecast global population of 9.3 billion by 2050, an estimated increase of 70 per cent in global food production will be needed to feed the world.

In food security, we should also be blunt. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is failing fully to meet its mandate to the poor of the world. Under its new management, FAO needs to set clear priorities for the future and eliminate the unsustainable administrative overheads it has long tolerated. If FAO does not do so, Australia will comprehensively review its development funding for FAO under our new aid effectiveness criteria.

Food is fundamental to development. So too is the right to education. All of the world's children must be given a chance at life that is good for them and good for their economies. For that reason, and learning from both the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the GAVI Alliance, Australia believes that the time has come for the international community to consider developing a new public-private institution with an explicit mandate for school education.

At present, this task is shared between the World Bank, UNICEF and UNESCO, with negligible private sector buy-in. We should consider, therefore, a new global fund for education that would concentrate exclusively on the immediate task of getting nearly 70 million children into schools by 2015. Australia would consider contributing substantially to such an institution to bring about real results at a rate as rapid as possible. I challenge education donors, current and potential, to join such a fund.

In supporting the world's most vulnerable peoples, we also recognize the world's estimated 370 million indigenous peoples, spread across 90 of the 193 United Nations Member States. They remain among the most marginalized and disadvantaged in the world, including in our country, Australia. That is why the Australian Government has reached beyond the apology to the Stolen Generations to pursue constitutional recognition for our First Peoples. And we are committed to closing the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

Our hope of answering the development challenges of the world is inextricably linked to the health of the planet itself. The planet ultimately can bear only so much. Scientists tell us that there are planetary boundaries beyond which we should not venture — in climate change, biodiversity loss, stratospheric ozone depletion, chemical pollution, ocean acidification and the depletion of freshwater reserves. It is not just a matter of atmospheric limits, but of the oceans as well.

Next year at Rio the international community will have the opportunity to act decisively to protect a planet now in stress, just as we need to take effective global action on climate change. Climate change will not go away, even if some choose the easy path of simply hiding their heads in the sand. If we do that, our children and theirs will never forgive us — nor should they.

As the global community, we face challenges of historic consequence — to our global economy, to global security, to the basic freedoms of all peoples, to our global environment, to the security of our citizens, to our obligation to the world's poor and to our planetary boundaries themselves.

While so many challenges lie before us, the past year has proven that when the international community does act collectively and decisively, we can deliver — as we have seen in the decisions of the Security Council on Libya and Côte d'Ivoire. But to be effective, this parliament of humankind, these United Nations, must continue to summon the political will of Member States to make our global institutions work. Otherwise, we will become a clanging gong, full of sound and sentiment, but ultimately symbolizing nothing.

When Secretary-General Ban came to Australia two weeks ago, he saw a country that values the rules-based system that the United Nations embodies. Australia today is a middle Power with global interests, animated by deep values of freedom and a fair go for all. This is the Australia we are proud of in its work in the world. This is the Australia that believes in the principles of good international citizenship. This is the Australia that rolls up its sleeves, the Australia that by nature wants to pitch in, the Australia that wants to make a difference for the betterment of all humankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister

for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Mr. Rassoul (Afghanistan): I am honoured to be here to read the statement of my President, His Excellency Hâmid Karzai, who had to return from New York to Kabul on an urgent basis, following the tragic assassination, through a terrorist plot, of Afghanistan's former President and Chairman of the High Peace Council, Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani.

The President's message begins:

"It is a great honour to address the General Assembly at this year's session, although I regret that I am unable to do so in person. I was here in New York the day before yesterday and had looked forward to attending this important session of the Assembly. I had to return to Kabul after the tragic news of the martyrdom of former President and Chairman of the Afghan High Peace Council, Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani. He was assassinated in a cowardly terrorist plot by the enemies of peace in our country.

"As I speak, the Afghan nation is mourning the loss not only of a valued and deeply respected national figure, but a champion of peace who worked tirelessly, up to the last moment of his distinguished life, for peace in his country. On behalf of the Afghan people, I am grateful for the messages of condolences expressed by leaders around the world at this terrible national loss in Afghanistan.

"As the single largest gathering of nations, the Assembly is the highest manifestation of the plurality of our world. It is also the most solemn opportunity we have, once a year, to bring to global attention our national concerns and to issues that are, in our view, of concern to the wider world.

"Over the past year, the world saw not only political volatility of historic proportions in the Middle East, but also an unabated global economic crisis, huge increases in the prices of food and energy and enormous devastation wrought by natural disasters. Most countries around the world have seen aggravated conditions of life for their peoples, and for many others the future looks continuously bleak. In short, we live in times of uncertainty and crisis, and it is at times like these that international cooperation gains true relevance and meaning.

"Ten days ago, this very city marked the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. On behalf of the people of Afghanistan, who have experienced the scourge of terrorism in its worst imaginable form, I pay homage and respect to the memory of the 9/11 tragedy and commiserate with the people of the United States for their sense of loss, which this anniversary has rekindled.

"On this occasion, I urge the Assembly to also reflect on the millions of lives around the world that were touched by terror and violence before 9/11 and those that have been lost to terrorist violence over the 10 years since.

"My country, Afghanistan, has suffered the most, but many — from Pakistan to India, Iraq, Europe and many others around the world — have fallen victim to this modern-day enemy of peace. I urge the Assembly to also honour the sacrifices many nations have made in the fight against terrorism around the world. Above all, however, I ask that we pause and take stock of where we are 10 years after the world was shaken into an unprecedented resolve to act in the face of a common enemy.

"Later this year, Afghanistan will also mark the anniversary of 10 years of the new political era heralded by the end of the Taliban rule and characterized by the beginning of a journey towards a peaceful, prosperous and democratic way of life. There is so much that we have to celebrate in the enormous achievements we have had, with the solidarity and generous help of the international community. These 10 years have been a truly unique chapter in the history of our ancient country.

"Grasping the opportunity, we took bold steps to reunite the country after decades of strife and violence, laying the foundations of a young democracy. Our social and economic accomplishments are phenomenal, greater by comparison than in any other period in our country's history. Never before have the Afghan people enjoyed comparable access to education and health or seen a greater development of infrastructure across the country.

"Regrettably, the sense of gratitude and pride we feel at our achievements is tempered by the absence of a key ingredient of any country's development, namely security. Despite the Afghan people's sincere embrace of the international fight against terrorism and the immeasurable sacrifices made on this path, we have yet to reap the rewards of experiencing a life free from violence and terror.

"We Afghans are proud to have partnered, over the past 10 years, with the world's struggle against terrorism. While together we have fought and crushed extremists in some of their long-held strongholds, elsewhere they have continued to thrive. Today, we see a worrying trend towards increased radicalization of the youth. Al-Qaida, despite the elimination of its leaders, remains active in the region, and the Taliban militancy maintains its deadly spectre over my country. Both continue to receive sanctuary and support in the region, which keeps them alive. This sanctuary problem is, without a doubt, the Achilles' heel of this war.

"To the extent that international terrorism and extremism remain real threats to international security, peace will remain mortgaged to the success of the fight in the region. To succeed, however, we must fundamentally review and adjust our approaches in this fight. It is urgent that we focus our strategy to make our collective struggle more objective and results-oriented. Our enemy must not be defined by a selective treatment of the geography to which we have access, but by an assessment of the threat it poses, regardless of where it may be based.

"The Afghan people remain ardent supporters of the fight against international terrorism, despite having suffered unspeakable losses in this endeavour. However, we fail to see the efficacy of the fight in which ordinary citizens bear the brunt while terrorist sanctuaries remain untouched, far away from the towns and villages of Afghanistan. The continued credibility of the fight will depend above all on taking its focus to where terrorism originates.

"On the other hand, when it comes to the Taliban insurgency, we do not see military action as the only solution. In our eager quest for restoring peace to the lives of our people, we have extended a hand of peace and reconciliation to all those Afghans who have had reason to remain outside the boundaries of the current political process in Afghanistan.

"Led until now by the late Mr. Rabbani, who is tragically no longer among us, through the High Peace Council, and supported by our partners from the international community, the peace process is a comprehensive effort. It covers the reintegration of armed combatants into dignified civilian life and reconciles the leadership of the Taliban.

"The reconciliation policy is based on our commitment to make the political process more inclusive and to provide a genuine and acceptable alternative to violence for all Taliban and other militant leaders, most of whom are currently based outside Afghanistan. Those leaders are welcome to return home and play their proper role in Afghan politics and Government — provided that they break ties with Al-Qaida, give up violent activities and accept the Afghan Constitution. Clearly, without sincere cooperation from regional and international partners, notably the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, this strategy will not succeed.

"The year 2011 is a crucial year for Afghanistan. The most important development for our country was the commencement of the transition process last July. This process will see the complete transfer of security responsibility from international forces to Afghans by the end of 2014. With the completion of the transition process, we Afghans and our international partners will achieve the most important strategic goal of our 10-year partnership: the emergence of a sovereign Afghanistan that is self-reliant and is the peaceful home of all Afghans, an Afghanistan that is at peace and lives in peace with the rest of the world.

"Needless to say, the success of the transition process depends on, besides the demand and solid resolve of the Afghan people, the continued support of the international community. The role of our NATO partners, particularly in terms of the capacity development of our security institutions, will be vital.

"On the other hand, transition is not just limited to security. Indeed, while transition is both desirable and inevitable, the economic effect of the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan needs to be managed carefully. In other words, for Afghanistan to become truly self-reliant, apart from the security transition, we will need a comprehensive economic transition. That transition will take much longer than the security transition and will require the continuation of steadfast support on the part of our international partners beyond 2014.

"In this context, we look forward to the much awaited International Conference on Afghanistan, to be held in Bonn, Germany, on 5 December 2011. Hosted by Germany and chaired by Afghanistan, the Bonn conference will be an opportunity for us to brief our international partners about the major Compact accomplishments of the past 10 years, and in particular about the progress of the Transition and reconciliation processes.

"Most importantly, at Bonn we will call for continued commitment of the international community to assist Afghanistan in the post-2014 period, after the foreign military presence on Afghanistan soil comes to an end. To that end, we will share our vision for the next 10 years — the vision of developing Afghanistan into a stable country, a functioning democracy and a prospering economy. As a country at the centre of an emerging 'new silk road', Afghanistan can become a regional hub for trade and transit. This vision is worth all the efforts we Afghans can muster, as well as all the support we can get from the international community.

"As a framework for long-term partnership, we will call for a new paradigm of cooperation between Afghanistan and our friends and partners. The strategic partnership that we are currently negotiating with the United States and other partners, including the European Union, will be a model for the kind of enduring and comprehensive partnership we wish to have with members of the international community. Such partnerships will help guarantee Afghanistan's security and stability, as well as assist our future economic development. I emphasize that neither our strategic partnership with the United States, nor any other partnerships we will forge in the future, will be a threat to our neighbours or to any other country.

"I also emphasize that in the context of these future partnerships, the principle of Afghan sovereignty and the centrality of the Afghan State must be given due credence; the manner of our continued partnership should conform to the requirements of a sovereign Afghanistan. As an important step in this direction, all the parallel structures created by the international community, be it in the security, governance or development arenas, must be removed to make space for the emergence of genuine and capable indigenous institutions.

"In particular, the role of the United Nations in Afghanistan must be adjusted to the requirements of Afghan sovereignty. I welcome the review of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, as authorized by the Secretary-General. In the months ahead, we look forward to participating in this review and to its positive conclusion.

"On the subject of regional cooperation, we are currently working closely with Afghanistan's old friend and brother, the Republic of Turkey, towards a regional conference to be held in Istanbul on 2 November 2011. Hosted by Turkey and championed by Afghanistan, the Istanbul Conference will help build a common regional vision for peace and stability. The Conference will recognize Afghanistan's quest for stability, as well as the region's growing need for confidence-building and cooperation in the face of the common challenges we face, notably terrorism, extremism, the drug trade and obstacles to legitimate interaction and movement, to name but a few.

"Over the past 10 years, we have undertaken numerous initiatives to promote regional cooperation, mainly with a view to trade and economic activities. However, we have learned that unless we boldly address our political differences and the deficit of trust and confidence that divides the region, regional cooperation will remain an aspiration. It is for that very reason that at the Istanbul Conference we will aim to focus on political and security issues.

"In the coming weeks, we will expect to consult with all countries in the Heart of Asia region to develop a common understanding in the run-up to the Conference.

"In today's interconnected world, developments in Afghanistan and the surrounding region are hugely influenced by events in the wider world. Therefore, we in Afghanistan are closely watching the situation in the Middle East. As a nation that has experienced war and destruction for many years, the eruption of violence in these countries fills us with anxiety. We are particularly concerned by the developments in Libya. We recognize the National Transitional Council as the legitimate Government of Libya. However, based on our own experience, we urge the brotherly Libyan nation to recall that the shortest route to peace will be through ensuring inclusivity and safeguarding the unity of the Libyan nation.

"The people of Afghanistan deeply sympathize with the plight of our brothers and sisters in Palestine. We reiterate our call for an immediate end to their suffering and the realization of their inalienable rights, including the right to an independent State. In this connection, we stand firmly behind the efforts aimed at Palestine's admission as a full Member of the United Nations. I hope that this year we will witness, with pride, the inclusion of Palestine as the 194th Member of the United Nations.

"The Afghan people also shared the pain of the loss experienced by the Japanese people when the natural disasters struck earlier this year. Japan is a longstanding friend of Afghanistan, and we are confident that this great nation will soon overcome the challenges of recovery.

"The Assembly is a manifestation of our collective will to stand together against the challenges that face human society and to realize the potential for a peaceful and prosperous world for all. Our gathering here is also a testimony to the valuable role that the United Nations plays in the realization of our collective will. I applaud the remarkable leadership that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has demonstrated in steering the United Nations in a direction where it can truly become an asset to a peaceful world.

"Finally, many countries from across the globe have stood in solidarity, over the past 10 years, with the Afghan people. On behalf of the people of Afghanistan, I again thank them for their support."

The meeting rose at 9 p.m.